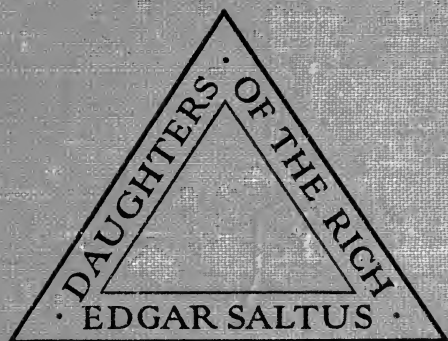
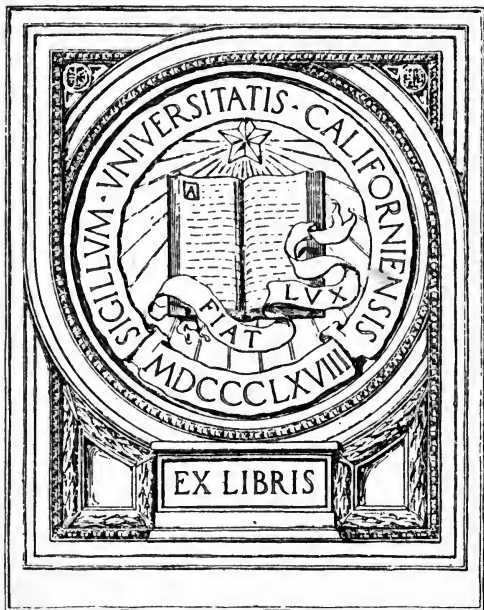




IN MEMORIAM
Mary J. L. Mc Donald



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DAUGHTERS OF THE RICH



By EDGAR SALTUS



NEW YORK
THE MACAULAY COMPANY

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By Edgar Saltus*

TO MR. W. H. WALKER
OF NEW YORK

In Memoriam
Wm. J. L. McDonald

DAUGHTERS OF THE RICH

A Novel

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THE PEOPLE IN IT

Gerard Welden, M. F. H., An American sportsman

Maud Barhyte, a New York girl of the fashionable set

Sally Malakoff, afterward Mrs. Welden

The Duc de Malakoff, Sally's first husband

Mrs. Kandy, Sally's mother, a rich widow

General Barhyte, Maud's father, a rich widower

The Comte de Dol, a French sportsman

The Marquis Aquaviva, an Italian sportsman

Prince Kara, a Russian sportsman

Lord Ferrers, an English sportsman

Mull Cantire, under-secretary, British Embassy, Paris

Mme. Oppenheim, a mondaine

Mme. de Cérisy, another mondaine

The Princesse de Solférino, a third mondaine

Louis Le Hillel, a swordsman

Baron Louradour, another swordsman

Dr. Binet-Valmer, one of the lights of French science

*Society people, maîtres d'hôtel, footmen, chauffeurs,
trainers, stable lads, surgeons, lawyers, a coroner, a
chief of police*

Daughters of the Rich

PART I

(Entr'acte)

I

WHITE PEACOCKS

"Nearly a crumpler," said a fat-faced man to Welden, whose horse, stumbling in the main street of Santa Barbara, had almost sat down.

Welden, pulling him together, dismounted. Supple and vigorous, he had an attractive face, laughing eyes and the air of being some one. Moreover, if this street in Southern California had been Rotten Row, he could not have been more studiously attired. His breeches were perfect. His boots had

been marrowboned into blonde mirrors. From one of them he flicked a speck with his crop.

"What shall I do with the brute, Wicks?" he asked. "And, by the way, if you expect me to buy him also, I will chuck the whole thing."

Wicks, standing fat-faced and bare-headed in the sunshine, reddened with emotion. The fish was landed, he told himself, and none too soon.

Wicks was in real estate, with signs—signs which described him as the Alert and Indefatigable Wicks—strewn through Santa Barbara, strewn, too, through the adjacent suburbs of Montecito and Miramar. It had been a bad year, however. Of nibbles there had been few, of bites none at all. Instead of the usual regiment of opulent Easterners, so eager for a residence in the perfumery and sunshine of the Slope, that they took anything at any price, there had been

but a handful of paupers, considering penurious bungalows.

Wicks, himself, had a bungalow, one unfortunately mortgaged. Also, he had his office before which, fat-faced and bare-headed, he stood. The rent was due and back, toward the Sierra Madre, in that bungalow, was Mrs. Wicks, two little Wickses, and a hired girl.

These luxuries mean money, and to Wicks money had become a haunting and elusive thing. Then, suddenly, by special grace, in the nick of time, just as the grocer was turning ugly, Welden, with all the aroma of wealth about him, had dropped from the cars, demanding something fit and on the sea.

"Something," a woman who accompanied this providence melodiously interluded, "in which one, if one liked, could have a little frisk."

As she spoke she had smiled, very infectiously, for Welden smiled too, and Wicks,

who had not an idea what a little frisk might be, unless their visit could be so catalogued, smiled also. But the woman's smile was not merely infectious, there was in it and about her a charm that was absolutely relaxing. She exhaled ease and an atmosphere indefinably foreign.

"Is she pretty?" the wife of Wicks' bosom inquired that evening when, on the porch of the mortgaged bungalow, he told her the incidents of the day.

"Yes, and better. I should say she was—she was—" Here the Alert and Indefatigable groped mentally after a term which suddenly he nailed. "I should say she was princessly."

"Princessly!" Mrs. Wicks dubiously repeated. "How was she dressed?"

But the question was beyond Wicks, as it is also beside the issue, which was in effect that these luminous people had concluded to consider White Peacocks, a house at Mira-

mar, which an Englishman had leisurely built and then, on acceding to a title, had actively vacated, leaving it to Wicks to sell for a hundred thousand dollars. "Not a ha'penny less," the Englishman had enjoined, "and more if possible." "Certainly, my lord," Wicks had replied, "I will try for a hundred and fifty."

Then, simultaneously with the Englishman's departure, there had occurred in Wall street a panic from which germinated a nightmare that sullenly overspread the entire land, and, until Welden appeared, no one had come that would consider at any price the purchase of the property.

But, on the first day, when in a motor, hired by the hour, Wicks had taken the Welden there, he had felt that it was probably a go. At the start, that is, once the main street of Santa Barbara was behind them, and they were rolling along the ocean boulevard which leads to Miramar, he had

mentioned, casually, as though it were an unimportant detail, the top price, adding immediately and mechanically, after a habit of his: "And such a bargain!" Then, mechanically also, he had played the flute to its charms.

White Peacocks needed no aria from him. It breathed for itself. The grounds, full of palms, of lilies, of masses and draperies of purple and scarlet blooms, were like an unglassed conservatory open to the air. They had the sea before them, the mountains behind, and the house with its thirty rooms, every one of which was scented the year around with geranium, with heliotrope and with brine, was agreeably furnished, comfortably arranged. Beyond, for servants, was another house; a stable, a garage; and in front of the main dwelling, on a lawn of vivid green, a dove-coloured peacock moved gingerly, almost moodily, but, at sight of them, expanded slowly yet immeasurably the fan of its extravagant tail.

It was the finishing touch.

Wicks, conscious of the impression produced, had been about to play the flute again, when Welden, who had been talking in French with his wife, turned to him.

"I will try it for a month; then, if it still pleases Mrs. Welden, I will make an offer."

Wicks, the Alert, the Indefatigable, sighed and looked down. Actually at the moment he was in agony. The unexpected and magnificent fish that had so providentially come into his net was wriggling unarrestably away. The commission on a month's rental was all on which he could surely count.

Conscious, however, that he must make some reply, with an effort he rallied.

"I don't know," he said, "that the owner would care to rent the property. But if price seems—"

Welden, standing there supple and smiling, cut him short.

"I never argue."

After all, Wicks had immediately reflected, the property was worth certainly a thousand a month—to any one who could be induced to pay it. At ten per cent. that meant a hundred for him, with the chance still of the bigger commission.

"Very good, sir," he had replied. "I will assume the responsibility."

In this manner the business had been temporarily concluded. On the premises was a lame ostler, who was Irish; a minute gardener, who was Japanese; a half-breed man of all work and an obese negro cook. These the Weldens retained, reinforcing them with servants of their own and with others recruited from Los Angeles—preparations which seemed to postulate permanency if signs and portents might. But Wicks could be sure of nothing, nor was he, until this radiant forenoon, when the crumpler nearly occurred, and Welden, damning the brute, dismounted.

It was then, reddening with emotion, that these anterior events were recalled, for now, at last, the fish, the magnificent fish, was landed.

"No, certainly not, we won't burden you with him," he replied in answer to Welden's protest. "If you will take a seat in my office for a moment, I will leave him at the livery across the way."

Pleasurably, a hand on the bridle, he led the horse off. The netting of the fish meant—at seven and a half per cent., which was the commission agreed—in the event of the top figure being reached—eleven hundred and twenty-five dollars. It was certainly a very radiant forenoon.

Welden, meanwhile, flicking still at his boots, strolled into the office and sat down on one of the three chairs which the place contained. On the wall was a map. Beneath was a pulpit desk, high and narrow. On it were documents, a china cat, other things as well, but most noticeably, a telephone,

which, as Welden seated himself, began ringing.

Welden, still flicking at his boots, stared aimlessly about. On one of the other chairs was the local sheet; he reached for it and was looking over the news of the day when Wicks reappeared.

"Excuse me," said the agent, who went to the telephone, which had continued to ring.

Welden but glanced at him. He had just read that the New York Central had decreased its dividend. The item was of interest; he happened to be a stockholder and mentally he began on a calculation which Wicks, his hand on the receiver, interrupted.

"It's for you. Your man, I think. He wants to speak to you."

Absently Welden looked up. "Nonsense," he presently remarked. "Harris knows better than that. If there is any message, though, tell them to give it to you."

Then, after fumbling in a pocket, he got out a gold pencil with which he jotted figures on the margin of the paper that he held. But the operation did not prevent him from hearing.

"Yes," Wicks was saying. "Mr. Welden is here. Mr. Welden says you are to tell me for him. He—What!"

At the "What," which was not a query, but an exclamation, Welden replaced the gold top on the pencil and putting it back in his pocket, turned again to the news.

Before him Wicks stood, the receiver at his ear, a hand pendent at his side. It was shaking a little.

The motion, odd in itself, attracted Welden. His eyes roamed slowly upward from it to the agent's face. Wicks was standing now, his mouth half open, looking limply at him.

Welden tossed the paper aside.

"Are you ill?"

Wicks closed his mouth, shook his head, then partly opened his mouth again. But still he did not speak.

Welden stood up. "Are you?" he repeated.

Then finally Wicks did speak. "Your wife!" he said slowly, and hanging the receiver up, flopped into a chair.

✓ The nightmare that had overspread the land was battenning individually on him. Through it the face of the grocer peered. With the grocer was the mortgagee. Both were throwing him and his out on the country road. That indeed might yet occur. At the moment, however, he was but being shaken, not roughly, but authoritatively, from a form of mental swoon.

"What is this about Mrs. Welden? Why the devil don't you tell me? Is she ill?"

Wicks, the Alert and Indefatigable, could but nod in reply.

"Very?" Welden persisted. "Come, damnation, don't keep me questioning you like this. What did they say?"

The winded Wicks now had got his breath. He straightened himself, and rising from the chair, put a hand on Welden's arm.

"She is—" And Wicks raised his eyes.

"Not dead!" cried Welden, starting back.

Wicks moved nearer and with that sympathy which, in certain crises, one human being will always show to another, said lowly:

"Mr. Welden, they tell me that this lady has been killed."

"Killed!" Welden, again starting back, repeated; "but how?"

Then the detail, passably gruesome, was produced. 

"They found her in bed, her throat cut from ear to ear."

II

THE INQUEST

Astride the brute on which ten minutes before the crumpler had nearly occurred, Welden tore down the street, galloped along the ocean boulevard, and on, into a scarlet lane, at the end of which stood White Peacocks.

The entrance was a bit beyond. Rather than make the brief circuit, he cleared a hedge, raced through the grounds and flung himself off at the steps of the verandah.

In the hall, through the open door, he had a glimpse of servants huddled together, and of a woman, her face to the wall, whimpering like a frightened cur.

On the floor above, at the head of the stairs, a man of the unmistakable domestic type stood uncertainly.

Welden pointed below. "Send those people where they belong."

Hurrying by, he wrenched open a door which he closed behind him. When presently that door reopened, he looked older; not white, but worn.

As before, at the head of the stair, the man was standing. Welden motioned him into another room, one wainscotted with bookless bookcases, from which two windows gave on the sea.

Through one of them Welden looked, though certainly it was not the sea that he saw. After a moment he turned. The man was standing by a table, his hands hanging at his sides. In and out of the palms the fingers moved, regularly, mechanically, perhaps unconsciously.

"Harris, close the door."

The man obeyed.

Welden added: "Tell me everything."

"It was my wife, sir, Perkins. She was

taking in the tray with the breakfast things, and when she saw, she let it fall and ran out and called to me, and I telephoned to Mr. Wickses."

"Have any of you any idea who did it?"

"No, sir, but—"

"But what?"

"Thinking as how you would wish it, I telephoned to the police."

Welden nodded. "I told Wicks to. They will be here shortly. Fetch some brandy and soda."

Harris turned. He was reopening the door when, through the windows, came the whirr of a motor, the sound of voices, the shuffle of feet.

"If that is the police," said Welden, "send them here."

From an oblong silver box that lay on the table he took a cigarette. While he was lighting it Harris reappeared. Accompanying him was a large man with small eyes, a

deformed stomach and a red moustache. As he entered he looked Welden over.

"I'm Chief of Police," he announced. "Right off I want—"

But Welden, accustomed to give orders and not at all to receive them, cut him short.

"Harris, show the way. Do whatever is required. The brandy and soda can wait."

In a little, however, the liquor was forthcoming.

"There are two of them, sir, besides the chief," Harris volunteered, placing, as he spoke, the bottles on the table. "And the coroner is here."

Welden, who had seated himself, took another cigarette. Through the windows came the savour of salt, the scent of flowers; there came, too, the bark of a dog, caught up and repeated. The forenoon was departing in perfect clarity and, save for an occasional footfall, save, too, for an indistinct

murmur of voices, in a peace that was perfect as well.

Shortly the silence was stirred. There came a rap at the door. Before Welden could answer, it opened. The chief entered. With him was a little man, with smoke-coloured glasses and a suit of leprous brown.

Closing the door, the officer indicated his companion. "This here is Dr. Quizenberry, the coroner. We're goin' to ask some questions."

"Sit down," said Welden. "Will you drink anything?"

The chief accepted, but the coroner refused. Welden filled a tumbler which he gave to the former.

He drank it noisily. "Nasty business," he muttered. "Damn nasty." Wiping his mouth and drawing a chair, he seated himself in front of Welden. "When did you last see yer wife?"

"A moment before you got here. You

probably mean, though, when did I last see her alive. That was at midnight."

"Nothin' unusual been goin' on?"

"Nothing."

The chief gnawed moodily at a finger nail. His thoughts were few and slow. He was assisting at their laborious accouchement. Presently, delivered of one, he looked suspiciously at it and from it to Welden.

"You and yer wife had separate rooms?"

Welden nodded.

"The man out there showed me yours, it's on the other side of the house."

Again Welden nodded.

"Durin' the night you heard nothin'?"

"Nothing whatever. But in regard to my domestic arrangements you may have noticed that in this house there are but two sleeping porches, one abutting from my room, the other from Mrs. Welden's. I have been in California before and when here I prefer to sleep in the open air. Mrs. Wel-

den had not accustomed herself to it, though naturally she slept with the windows open."

"That's right," said Dr. Quizenberry, "and with the screen door to the porch unfastened. Anybody could have climbed in."

"Anythin' missin'?" the chief inquired.

"I do not know," Welden answered. "Usually Mrs. Welden did not appear much before noon. This morning, long before she would ordinarily have been up, I was in Santa Barbara. Since I got back I have had no time to look."

Under the steady gaze of Welden's eyes, and the prompt and rapid fire of his speech, the chief's laboriously accouched suspicion died. Burying it decently, he asked: "Had yer wife any enemies?"

"Probably," Welden, with an uplift of the chin, replied. "But hardly among such people."

At that the chief leaned forward. The

coroner cocked an eye. The possibility that the statement had not been understood, occurred to Welden.

"I mean," he resumed, "that such enemies as Mrs. Welden may have had were of her own class, and assuming the impossible, assuming, that is, that their enmity could have been murderous, they would hardly have gone about it in this way."

"Hey?" the chief, groping still in darkness, threw out.

But the coroner had got it. "That's right," he threw in. "It's not the crime of an educated person; more like some Jack the Ripper business."

"Or the Roo Morgue," the now enlightened chief insinuated, indicating by the insinuation that he, at any rate, was educated. "You've a greaser here," he continued. "I don't care for him, or for the Jap either."

"They were here before I came," Welden answered. "There is also an Irishman, a

negro and some servants we got from Los Angeles. I know nothing about any of them. But Harris, the man who showed you about, and Perkins, his wife, came with us from Europe. I have every confidence in them. Perkins always took care of Mrs. Welden's jewelry."

"Had she much?"

For a moment Welden's long thin fingers beat a tattoo on the arm of his chair. "Quite a lot," he finally replied. "But the majority of it is at our bankers' in Paris. Here Mrs. Welden had with her a string of pearls, a few pins and some rather valuable rings which she got recently in India."

"There are no rings on her hands. Did she sleep with 'em?"

"Really," said Welden, "I am not sure. My impression is that she did not."

"What were they, dimons?"

Welden drummed for a moment again. "There were two table-cut diamonds, two

tallow drop emeralds, an inch-long sapphire and a double ruby, a ruby set on a ruby, one on top of the other."

The chief sat up. "What would yer say they were worth?"

Welden, running his fingers through his thick, bright hair, looked at the ceiling and then back at the officer. "At Delhi, in our money, the rubies cost forty-five thousand, altogether the others cost as much more. Here, of course, they would come higher."

The chief whistled. It was his welcome to the light, clear, direct, unequivocal, which then broke fully upon him. He jumped to his feet.

"If they're gone," he exclaimed, "there's the motive. Let's see if they've been pinched."

"That's right," said Dr. Quizenberry, rising too.

"Chief," said Welden, rising also, "I was in that room before you came. It may give

you a poor opinion of me, but it will be a little before I care to return."

"Poor opinion! Lord! If my wife had been done up as yours has, I'll be jiggered if I could show your nerve. It's grit yer got, real grit."

"That's right," the coroner repeated. "That's right."

But Welden had rung for Harris. As the authorities passed from the room he went again to the window.

Before him the Pacific stretched, a syrupy blue. Over it he looked and far beyond, to another ocean, one that beat against the coast of France. Above it a vision mounted, the picture of a pillowed head. That picture, photographed on the mind's encephalic films, became a negative on which developed others. At Deauville, in the hall of a villa, he saw—

"Mr. Welden," some one was saying.

He turned. The authorities were before

him, the chief nodding significantly while the other grimly smiled.

"Won't you have another drink?" Welden asked.

"Yes, I will," said the chief.

"That's right," said the coroner, "I will too."

Then, as they helped themselves and stood there, the one large, the other small, both ludicrous and equally imbecile, they reminded Welden of some scene, in some play, that he had seen somewhere long before.

"The pearls and pins are safe," the big man began. "They were locked in a bag, and they're there now. But the rings are gone. The maid says they were on the dressin' table last night, when she was gettin' yer wife ready for bed. Since which they've been cribbed. Whoever pinched 'em did it, and I'll bet yer now I know who that is, for though they're gone, somethin' has turned up. Can yer guess what?"

But Welden could not.

"The instrument! When there's any funny business, that's what we look for; that and the motive. When we've both, we've only to show the opportunity to nail the man. Well, we have. It's the Irishman. The knife was in the barn. The motive—and motive enough—was the rings; the opportunity—"

"But," Welden protested, "the poor devil is lame. He could not have climbed to the porch."

"Oho! You don't know how spry a lame man can be. Besides, how do we know that he did climb? In a house like this, unless the boss sees to it himself, yer never sure about the doors and windows. Anyhow, what did he have a carving knife stuck in his hay for? That's no place for a bleeder. Lord! And an alibi rollin' right out of him. That's the way with these vermin. Whenever they do anythin' crooked, they always have an

alibi and more vermin to back 'em up. It's my sworn duty to protect the bastard, but, if it wasn't, Lord! I'd say lynch him. I wasn't raised here, I came from the South."

"That's right," the coroner remarked, and meditatively finished his glass.

"Well, anyhow, he's on his way to the lock-up," the chief continued, putting down his own.

"When's the inquest?" he asked, turning to Dr. Quizenberry.

"To-morrow noon."

Turning to Welden he added: "I can count on yer to be there?"

"Naturally," Welden answered, and the authorities withdrew.

When they had gone, Welden took from his pocket a letter, one already opened, which he re-read, tore slowly to bits, and then poured out a glass of brandy. Before he had finished it, Harris reappeared.

"Will you have luncheon, sir?"

Welden nodded. "You and Perkins must get everything in order. You must also find an undertaker. Say that he is to arrange about a plot and that he is also to arrange with an Episcopal clergyman to hold services here and at the grave. Afterward, I shall not require Perkins, and as I cannot expect you to leave her, I will give you each six months' wages, and your expenses home."

"Thank you, sir, I am sure we are both very grateful. Will you have luncheon here, sir, or in the breakfast room?"

"I will have it here. By the way, Mrs. Welden is to be in ball gown. The canary one, Perkins will know, with a lace scarf about the neck, high up. If the scarf is insufficient, use an opera cloak, the violet and gold one. Perkins will know about that also."

"Yes, sir. It will be attended to. Shall I fetch the luncheon now, sir?"

Welden nodded.

In a little while the man returned with a tray. When he had arranged it, he said:

"Begging your pardon, sir, I was to ask would you wish the hair marcelled?"

"Whatever is necessary. And, Harris—"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell the undertaker that before the coffin is closed, he is to notify me. I wish to go there."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. Luncheon is served."

For hours Welden sat, looking at the sea, looking, too, at the pictures that developed on the mind's encephalic films.

Toward sunset, other pictures developed. On the horizon clouds, sinister and malignant, shaped themselves into the resemblance of enormous centaurs, combating with each other for mountains of gold and of flame. The sky was dyed with their wounds, flooded with the hemorrhages of the monstrous massacre. Sometimes masses of flesh were torn

and hurled into craters. Sometimes others were tossed like shawls across the bleeding sky.

Eastward, from over the Sierra Madre, titans trooped to the fight. It was as though they had sprung suddenly across the ages from their fabulous dream, and just as they menaced the world, abruptly they vanished. Before them an immense arc had been flung. Within the rainbow, throughout its entire semi-circumference, a vapour floated, thick, glistening and mauve.

Presently, as if a curtain had risen, that passed, banished by the sudden sun. From the west the centaurs had fled, and now, throughout the heavens, stretched archipelagoes, deliciously pink, that seemed like lands of love.

Coerced by the splendour of the spectacle, Welden had gone out on the lawn. The fair beauty of the sky detained him. It seemed inaugural of larger life.

III

THE CLUE

To the vulgar any indecency is amusing, the greater the shamelessness of it the more thorough the mirth; and, on the morrow, there was thrown into this tenebrous drama, a quick note hilarious and obscene, one that, with the usual attentuations, went reverberating through the press. For the case, already famous, entered at once into that high spectacular class which invites people, previously unacquainted, to discuss and surmise.

In the trains, on the boats, in smoking compartments, wherever men are penned together, individuals who had never seen each other before, and who, ordinarily, would not much wish to again, found in it a subject of common concern.

Perhaps nothing excites the imagination

quite so thoroughly as mystery does, and here was one graduated to every taste, a story equally absorbing to high and low, and not locally merely, for, as it was immediately recognised, the Weldens were people of position, both at home and abroad.

According to statements telegraphed to the California press, from New York, Welden's family had been identified with that city since its incorporation, and even before, at a time when it was Nieuw Orange, and not yet New York. While, as for the murdered woman, born a Kandy, and affiliated with quite Manhattan's best, she had married Welden after divorcing her first husband, a foreigner, the Duc de Malakoff.

To these outlines, details were added. Prior to the marriage, Welden, who was a man of inherited wealth, had been engaged to Miss Barhyte, a New York girl of the ultra-fashionable set. But, coincidentally with the divorce, the engagement had been

broken, and Welden and Malakoff had gone out together, though, after the French fashion, without appreciable damage.

But why had they gone out? Why had the engagement been broken, and why the divorce?

Here were pleasurable mysteries superposing themselves on the denser darkness of the crime, and suggesting to the detectives of the breakfast table that it was assassins of the duke who had done it; if not, then emissaries of the girl.

For by the time the foregoing and very incorrect details, together with bogus presentations of all concerned, had been journalistically set forth, by that time, the lame ostler had been released.

Amid great hilarity and to the satisfaction of everybody—save of one policeman only—he had demonstrated that if at the hour, two A. M., at which time it had been shown the crime was committed, he were il-

legally occupied, the illegality had been effected at Santa Barbara with the privity, connivance and in the society of that policeman's wife. The woman, immediately summoned, had at first hotly denied, but prodded with questions at once circumstantial and deplorably intimate, finally yielded, and admitted the fact.

Thereupon, no one else being under suspicion, and no further evidence having been adduced, verdict was rendered that the deceased had come to her death at the hands of some person or persons unknown.

Then, for the bono publicanism of it—which, being interpreted, meant little more than the coin of affluent Easterners, who, already scarce, might become scarcer—it was felt that town and county ought to make the apprehension of the person or persons definitely worth while. But before the matter could be put into an inviting shape, provided, that is, there was

any real intention of so putting it, Welden offered a reward of \$25,000 for such information as would lead to their arrest and conviction; \$5,000 additional for the recovery of the rings.

The gross amount, a small fortune to some, a large one to many, fevered a number of people and, among them, Wicks particularly.

In those days, Wicks was an unhappy man. Only a fortnight had intervened between the renting of White Peacocks and the morning on which Welden had intimated his intention of buying the property. Then this thing had occurred, and from his hand, from his lips even, the cup had been torn. The cup, or more exactly its contents, the compensation, would have sufficed until January, when the Eastern influx of affluence was usually due. But this was April. January was many moons away, and things looked very bleak in the mortgaged bun-

galow, on the porch of which, endlessly he went over them all. It was, though, a distressed and weary Wicks who did it, and weary and distressed was the woman whom he forced to hear and rehear the tale.

Then, into the bleakness of things, there tumbled the announcement of the rewards. They inflamed Wicks, who, though he lacked the gift of divination, was at least alert and indefatigable, or at least, so claimed to be, and these were attributes which, chance facilitating, might aid him to secure the portentous sum. In his favour moreover was his superior quality of agent of the estate. Strangers might hover about there, detectives, whether amateur or professional, might prowl there as well, and against these the guilty would be on their guard, whereas his presence would be taken as a matter of course. In the mere exercise of his functions he was free to roam at will.

These considerations, natural in them-

selves, had for basis an assumption, which Wicks by no means reached alone, that the murder was the work of someone directly associated with the estate. Possibly it might have been done by a passing bandit. Possibly, also, the criminal might be a pirate come in from the sea. But in that case it were necessary to assume on the part of an outsider, an entire familiarity with the locale, and a knowledge not only of the jewels, but of the intimate fact that the dead woman slept alone. Acquaintance with these matters was of course possible, for the reason that anything and everything is. But, at least, it was not probable.

Eliminating, therefore, the outsider, the murder was necessarily the work of some of those within. From the latter the adulterous ostler was already excluded. The others, the half-breed, the negro, the Japanese, together with the laundress, a scullion and a housemaid, recruited from Los An-

geles, were all quartered in a separate building. The fact had been brought out at the inquest, where it had been also shown that during the Weldens' tenancy, none of them, except the housemaid, the scullion and the cook, had ever entered the house; and into the main part of it, as distinct from the kitchen and its offices, the cook and the scullion had not once, except on the morning when the murder was discovered, been known or permitted to come.

The housemaid had necessarily the run of it, but by day only, and while information concerning the rings might have been conveyed by her to other parties, she would not have been aware that they were unprotected at night, unless she had been so informed by Perkins, or by Harris, who as Perkins' husband, probably knew as much as she did.

On the other hand, information of this character would hardly be supplied by upper servants, who lived apart from the others,

particularly as one might say, on an acquaintance so brief. You never can tell, however, yet accepting the facts as they appeared, the matter narrowed down to those who slept in the house, that is to say, to Harris and Perkins.

For clearly Welden was out of it, if for no other reason than because, had he wished to be rid of the lady, a brief sojourn in neighbourly Nevada would suffice to set him legally free. Or, if divorce seemed circuitous, a slight shove from the bluff, a tarantula put nesting in her bed, and, without inconvenience, the thing was done. But anything of the kind was beyond peradventure, in addition to being absurd. Men of the world do not kill an obnoxious wife. They find it simpler to detest her. Moreover, such men as do murder their wives, do not first steal the lady's jewels and then offer a reward for their own apprehension, another for the recovery of the gems. They do not,

that is, unless they are lunatics, and anyone saner than Welden it were difficult to meet.

These deductions Wicks did not reach unaided or even as they are here set forth. On the contrary, they were prompted in part by the press, partly by the wife of his bosom. As a consequence, they were superficial and, therefore, unsound. But they satisfied, so fully even that he kept an alert eye on Harris, an indefatigable one on Perkins.

In spite of which he saw nothing suspicious. At the time being he was not, however, as close to them as he could have wished, and that defect he artfully remedied. After the funeral, Welden, leaving for address the Plaza, New York, boarded a train and was taken away. But these two remained in situations luringly procured at wages—California wages!—such as they had never known, never heard of or even dreamed.

Then for a while mention of the murder,

dropped by the press, faded from Miramar. But not from Santa Barbara. There the Alert and Indefatigable, after rehearsing it endlessly to his weary wife, happened suddenly on a clue.

PART II

THE DAUGHTERS

I

SALLY'S DUKE

To go back a little.

Sally Malakoff was twenty. She was rich, good looking, and a duchess, yet she described herself as a miserable woman and the world believed her. But though the world believed it did not sympathise. It was felt that she had not acted as she should have. For that there were excuses.

A little while before she had married a brute. Though a New York girl, she was at the time very ignorant. In the way we live now that is exceptional. Married women

discuss matters before the young person with a clarity which leaves her nothing to guess about. Through some miracle, Sally had been left in the dark. A contributory cause may have been her mentality which was shallow, but, as she was naturally sly, the miracle was none the less marvellous. Otherwise, in appearance and manner that is, she was a typically sweet young thing. She talked nicely about nothing. Her features were dainty and delicate. Her hair was dark and she had mauve eyes, which, oblique and half closed, gave her an aspect faintly Chinese. Born a Kandy, and known generally as Sugar Candy, she quite lived up to the name.

Heat sugar and abruptly it boils. Sally did boil, not long, and not effervescently, but with a sort of contained rage. Marriage she had seen somewhere defined as an association for the pursuit of things human and divine, and it was with angry amaze-

ment that she discovered what, in her case, was the derisive falsity of the definition.

During the honeymoon, or more exactly during Malakoff's, for the girl was but an indignant participator in it, the man approached her after the fashion of a pasha who has acquired a slave. The girl loathed him for it, and it was that loathing perhaps which directly precipitated this drama. On the other hand, if, as it has been affirmed, one's destiny is preordered, it may be that even otherwise the result would have been the same. Admitting fatality, one's moods cannot alter it. But the fault of it, in so far at least as is humanly discernible, rested, primarily, not with Sally's husband, but with her mother, never more than a relative to this girl, whose father had been but an acquaintance.

The latter, Sam Kandy, could have had but three objects in life; to marry, have a child and make a fortune; for these things

accomplished, he concluded to die, and did so, after the fine New York fashion, with no fuss whatever, and in a manner which Mrs. Kandy, who had no affection for him, or for anyone save herself, described as most gentlemanly.

That, though, was only an amiable commonplace. In New York it is a man's mere duty to leave a lot of money. Sam Kandy bequeathed to his daughter one million for life, with reversion to her issue, failing which, the principal passed to his nephews. To his widow he left six million absolutely.

The provisions of the will enabled Mrs. Kandy to bear the testator's loss with a fortitude eminently Christian. She was a large, fair woman, with a large, fair wig, and the purplish complexion which internal disturbances when combined with *poudre de riz* will impart, and when through a jewelled lorgnette, she surveyed the trappings of her woe, she declared in the shrill voice which

was habitual to her, that black is not becoming.

Nor is it. But the lady must have preferred colours. Shortly she resumed them, and, with Sally, betook herself to Paris.

It was in Paris that Malakoff was encountered, and the marriage ensued.

Jean-René-Marie, Duc de Malakoff, Prince de l'Alma, had, from adolescence, been trained like a colt for the Grand Prix in the international steeplechase of marriage. "Duchesse de Malakoff," his mother, ceaselessly, had dinged in his ears. "That, at the lowest, is worth ten million francs." The poor woman knew. Five million francs was what her people had paid—five million thrown in the gutter—and since then prices had doubled. But her son, thus far, when not outclassed, had been outpaced. There was Miss Murray, the American heiress, welshed from him by Solférino. There was Miss Beux, laden down with brewery guin-

eas, whom d'Ostende had won by a nose. There was Mlle. Moses, the pearl of the Ghetto, whom d'Eylau had jockeyed away. There was Señorita Lopez y Montez, sole child of the Chilean Cræsus, whom Cambacères had filched from his hand.

These misadventures diminished the lustre of a title that, while obviously Second Empire, was yet a trifle heavy for one who has nothing, which, barring debts—the floating debt of the duchy—and an assortment of vices—the traditional vices of the French nobility—constituted the sole possessions of this man, who was not bad looking.

Malakoff had blue-black hair, blue-black eyes, a thin, straight nose, and a retreating chin, which a pointed beard concealed. Without being tall, he was not short, but, since the misadventures, perhaps out of training, for he had ceased to give in at the waist. He dressed less abominably than the majority of Frenchmen, got his clothes from London,

and with them displayed an air of being surrounded by lackeys ready at a gesture from him to shut the door in anyone's face, that air of indisputable superiority which, at an earlier epoch, when the nobility had been divested of other insignia, persisted, and so exasperated that the one remedy for its arrogance was the austere guillotine.

Though seigneurial—in appearance—he could—when it suited him—unbend. On such occasions he was affable or merely canaille.

Mrs. Kandy, who met him on the stalking ground which the American embassy is, thought him simply fascinating. To Sally, he was part of the landscape, and that not from any democratic disdain—she had none, the New York girl never does have any—but for the more intimate reason that in the neighbourhood of Fifth Avenue there was a man with laughing eyes, with whom she fancied herself in love.

Sally, quoted currently at ten million francs, flattered Malakoff's eye. He had trained for more, but latterly he felt that he had trained in vain.

Mrs. Kandy, who had trained also, but only in social values, for which she had a naïve and inexact appreciation, encouraged him to make up to the girl, when she saw that he had no intention of making up to the girl's mamma, which he certainly would have, had he known the terms of Sam Kandy's will.

He did not know, however, nor, at the moment, was there any one that could acquaint him with them, except Mrs. Kandy, who, in telling the truth, which she sometimes did, sometimes found it advantageous not to tell all of it.

"And so you wish to have my little girl for your wife," she shrilly resumed, when, in the elaborate suite which she occupied at the Elysée Hôtel, the formal and unleisurely demand had been made.

"Partly that," he replied in the passable English which he had acquired in preparation for the Prix. "Partly that, but partly also, that I may have you for mother-in-law."

No duke had ever talked in such a fashion to Mrs. Kandy. Barring the Duke of Kincardine, who, the previous winter, had lounged about New York, no duke had ever talked to her at all, and, as for Kincardine, he had, on meeting her, only said; "Hello," after which he had lounged away. Malakoff's treatment was at least more gracious, and graciousness to herself was Mrs. Kandy's forte.

"If you are good to her, I shall feel that I can die in peace," remarked the lady, who, whatever happened, had no intention of doing anything of the kind.

Malakoff, with equal sincerity, replied: "The dear angel, I will refuse her nothing."

"Sally has a million dollars," Mrs. Kandy

threw in, omitting, however, to fill it up with the fact that the million was for life.

"Devilish thin," thought Malakoff, who thought, too, of backing out. But a million dollars spells five million francs, and that amount he doubted his ability to duplicate.

"At my death," Mrs. Kandy added, with a candour which she afterward tearfully regretted, "Sally will have six million more."

But the contingency, remote to him, lugubrious to her, neither chose to consider further, and presently, after Sally had been summoned, and the non-existent duchy had been placed at her feet, Malakoff took himself off.

Not far, however, around the corner merely to the rue Galilée, where dwelled a Mme. Oppenheim who was his mistress, and who had supported him for years.

Giselle Oppenheim, born de Beaupré, had been married into the high finance by her people, who were very noble, prodigiously

proud, and equally poor. Giselle de Beau-pré accepted Oppenheim for money in the same measure that he sought her for place. That was ten years before. Since then, Oppenheim had paid for his aspirations, and, from an Anglo-Saxon standpoint, perhaps most notably in Malakoff, with whom, none the less, he was on the best terms in the world and to whom not infrequently he complained when the third party of this unholy trinity became, as she often did become, particularly waspish. For the lady, imperious to Oppenheim, was wax in the hands of Malakoff, whom she loved with a love that was at once violent, sensual and tender.

On this evening, after leaving the Kandys', he told her of his venture.

"It is not the Peru," she swiftly summarised, when he had cited the dower. "Enfin!" she consoling continued, "you might have done worse. Besides, in marrying an Ameri-

can, there can be no question of *mésalliance*."

That sentiment her race dictated. Oddly, it had never reproached her with the left-handed *mésalliance* that she had contracted with this man, whose grandfather had been a cheesemonger. But love has its own extenuations. Moreover, while, from the standpoint of the old nobility, Malakoff was nobody, he yet managed to appear as though the spirit of that nobility were incarnated in him.

"Tell me," Mme. Oppenheim continued. "In appearance is she better than I?"

Is the lily fairer than the rose? Sally had the ephemeral charm of the former. She was a book bound in muslin, with all the pages blank. What time and fate would scrawl there, fate and time would tell. As yet they were white. As yet the girl was a lily. Mme. Oppenheim was the rose, large, colourful, majestic.

At the question, Malakoff looked at her. Her eyes, like his own, were dark. There the resemblance ended. For while he was almost typically Latin, the fainter umber of her skin, and the rich orange of her hair, suggested an alien race. It had been said that she was the souvenir of a caprice which her mother had entertained for an Austrian prince, and as, at the question, Malakoff looked at her, he recalled the story.

“Bah!” he replied.

The exclamation sufficed. Besides, Mme. Oppenheim was otherwise assured. Between Malakoff and herself subsisted what is called the *collage*, that glueing of two natures together which is the result of a long liaison and which, when effected, is the strongest of life's fragile ties. The lady was, therefore, unvisited by any vulgar sense of jealousy. In addition, in spite of the *collage*, or more precisely, because of it, it was necessary that Malakoff should establish himself in a

manner befitting his rank. The anterior misadventures of the steeplechase had disappointed her almost as thoroughly as they had him.

"Very good," she resumed. "I will call on her to-morrow."

Around the corner, meanwhile, the poetry of the engagement was also being discussed.

"Of course, my dear," Mrs. Kandy remarked, "some mothers prefer Englishmen for their daughters, but where can they get a duke?"

Meditatively Sally helped herself from a sac of bon-bons. "I don't see," she replied, "why they should want one at all."

Mrs. Kandy waved her lorgnette. "That only shows how foolish you are. A duke makes a duchess, and wherever a duchess goes she is It."

"And I don't love him."

"On such a short acquaintance it would be most improper if you did. For that matter,

when I married your father, I did not love him, either, but I admired him, and any girl can admire a duke."

Sally shook her head. She was thinking of the man with laughing eyes. Thinking, too, of his attentions to Maud Barhyte, a New York girl whom she also knew, and whom she envied greatly.

"I don't know," she answered at last.

"But I do," retorted Mrs. Kandy. "Now ring for Perkins and go to bed."

Sally did ring. A wooden-faced maid appeared. Later, when the woman was brushing the girl's hair, Sally said to her:

"I am engaged to a duke."

"Yes, mem."

Had Sally said she was engaged to a baboon, the reply would have been the same. Perkins knew her business. It was not for her to manifest any interest in anything concerning her employers. It was for her to

attend to her duties. She did attend to them, and attended to them well.

"But I will keep you, Perkins."

"Thank you, mem."

The brushing continued. Presently Perkins said: "If you please, mem, I'm to be married too."

In the mirror before her Sally looked at the woman in whose face there was not a vestige of expression.

"His name is 'Arris, mem. He's butler and valet, mem, and been only in the best 'ouses."

"Harris!" Sally repeated. "Well, perhaps, I may take him when I have a house of my own, but you will be Perkins just the same."

"Thank you, mem."

Such was Sally's wooing. The marriage was equally enchanting.

Before it occurred, Malakoff, apprised by his avoué of the terms of Sam Kandy's will,

laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh. Had Mrs. Kandy seen him at that moment, she would have been alarmed. Could she have read his thoughts, she would have known that her alarm was justified.

There was the Duc de Chose, who had bagged the booty of despoiled Venezuela; de la Dèche, who had got the loot of the wreckage of the railways of the United States; Prince Eugène, the most obscure of the obscurest Napoléonides, who had gobbled the heiress of Monte Carlo's perfumed hell; Solférino, who had pocketed the prize American dot; d'Ostende, who had received with his bride a ton of brewery guineas; and he, Malakoff, who was as good as any of them, was done, done again, and out a beggarly million at that!

He could still desist, and would have, but an idea occurred to him. It was then that he laughed.

In accordance with local usage, the civil

ceremony, which precedes the religious rites, took place at the Mairie of the precinct in which Malakoff resided. The formalities, brief in themselves, became exasperating by reason of a long delay which intervened.

Afterward, at the Elysée Hôtel, Malakoff requested a word with Mrs. Kandy.

"Madam," he began, when Sally had gone, "in asking the hand of your daughter, I said it was not merely that I might have her for wife, but in order, also, that I might have you for mother-in-law. Do you recall it?"

Mrs. Kandy, laced to the point of suffocation, wished that he would hurry and go. But, manfully, from a red and gilt armchair in which she squirmed, she smiled.

"I do, indeed. I thought it very gracious."

Malakoff smiled also—that smile in which the eyes have no part, and which consists in showing the teeth.

"You are most amiable. But at the time

I hardly supposed you would leave me in the cold."

"In the cold!" Mrs. Kandy, shifting uneasily, repeated.

"In the street, if you prefer. For that is what it amounts to. You told me that your daughter has a million. It is true. But the income only. That is insufficient."

Mrs. Kandy raised her lorgnette. "But you knew this before. Mr. Ridgeway—"

Malakoff bowed. "That is also true. This Ridgeway, your lawyer, acquainted my man of business with the facts. But enamoured as I was, and am of your daughter, I did not sufficiently consider them. This morning, during the delay which I regret you should have experienced at the Mairie, I had the fullest opportunity to do so, and I have concluded to proceed no further."

"What!"

Malakoff plucked at his beard. "I have concluded not to marry your daughter."

At the outrageousness of that, Mrs. Kandy forgot her stays. She realised only that she was the mother of a duchess, the potential grandmother of a prince, and dismissing grammar, she cried: "But you are; you have."

Malakoff looked at her much as though she were a wriggling worm, and it was with utter indifference to her anguish that he answered: "Not by the Church, and in my world it is only the religious ceremony that counts."

"And you mean to say!" Mrs. Kandy screamed. Then, English failing, she soared into French. "Mais, c'est indigne! You leave my child neither fish, flesh nor fowl."

Malakoff caught the statement and with a shrug of his shoulders tossed it back.

"It is only what you leave me. In the Americas, I am aware, matters arrange themselves otherwise. There a man may work. I believe a man is even expected to.

Here it is different. A man, such as I am at least, not only is not expected to work, but would not be tolerated if he tried. Imagine to yourself the Duc de Malakoff, grocer, stockbroker even! Alors, quoi?"

From purple, Mrs. Kandy turned livid.

"I shall appeal to the embassy. I will send for my lawyer!"

Malakoff took up his hat. "I earnestly recommend you to do both. Meanwhile favour me by conveying my homage to your daughter. I have had the honour to bid you good-day."

But when he had gone, and Mrs. Kandy had loosened her stays, she felt better and thought better, at least of one of her threats. The embassy could do nothing. To appeal there would be but to bill the whole ridiculous story to all the cynical world. She telephoned instead to Ridgeway, who shortly was announced.

Mr. Ridgeway's mouth was full of gold

teeth. While listening to her tale, he exhibited them very freely. He was thinking what an amazing fool she was.

"Of course," he said at last, placing as he spoke a forefinger in the middle of his forehead, "the marriage has not been consummated, and an action to nullify the contract can be brought. Even otherwise, the attitude of this gentleman has been foreseen. It constitutes what the Code terms a *sévice grave*, and a divorce can be had. But any proceedings in the matter will cause a scandal, one that unfortunately will reflect on your daughter. Now it is evident that this gentleman wants money. They all do, the majority of the aristos that is, and they rarely marry unless they get it. My advice is, give it to him. Probably a hundred thousand francs will suffice. I will see his avoué and let you know."

"It is outrageous," said Mrs. Kandy, sniff-

fling and snuffing at a vinaigrette. "No lady was ever so treated."

Mrs. Kandy was then in a loose flowing robe, tenderly pink, which lace befluttered. In spite of her complaint, she felt better.

The relief was transient. Mr. Ridgeway on visiting Malakoff's attorney found that a hundred thousand was a mere fraction of the amount required. Malakoff demanded five million francs.

When these figures were recited to Mrs. Kandy, instantly the woman in that tender gown was ousted by a female. She grimaced queerly. Epilepsy of the epiglottis attacked her. Instead of employing the language of the ornate, she dropped into that of the fish-wife.

"Pay a man a million dollars to sleep with my daughter! Never!"

Never is a long word. Before the interview was concluded, she decided to do so.

"I am ruining myself," she sobbed.

"It is very noble of you," said Mr. Ridgeway, who, for that remark of his, and for that other of hers, charged extra.

A LITTLE TOKEN

When the five million francs had been paid and Sally Kandy became definitely Sally Malakoff, an act interrelated with the drama of her life was occurring in New York.

There in the library of a large house, situated in that part of Madison avenue, which, with Gramercy Park, still represents what residential New York used to be, a man was talking to a girl.

The man was Welden, the girl was Maud Barhyte. She was standing. He was seated.

Beside him was a table on which was an Oxford edition, in Greek, of the old Sicilian poets. At the moment, it was the only book that the library contained. Opposite was a

mantel, above it, a mirror. To the right was a piano, at the left a sofa. On the walls were pictures of former Barhytes, women with pointed bodices and powdered hair; men in vermilion with swords and lace jabots. In addition to the book, the table had on it a buvard, an elaborate service for writing, and a jewelled bag of gold mesh, which the girl had put down.

A little before, letting herself in with a latch-key, as was her custom, she had come from a drive. She wore a costume of light cloth, faintly blue, exquisitely embroidered. Beneath was silk and mousseline de soie, less durable, and more costly than the garment. On her head was a hat for which she had been charged eighty dollars. She had worn it once before, and might wear it once again.

The girl was not on that account a fool. She read Plato in the original, and what is less lovely and more difficult, she read Kant.

What is unusual, she thought; what is exceptional, she meditated; what is remarkable, she prayed.

She prayed that she might do nothing that should not charm, say nothing that should not please.

Generally the prayer was granted, and sometimes more fully than she wished. Men on first meeting her forgot that they were conventional beings, and remembered that they were men.

"That ought not to be allowed," the wit of a ball-room had remarked, when in shimmering white, this girl had passed. For in her eyes that were violet, in the rich orange of her hair, in the contour of her lips, that seemed meeting for love, in the oval of her perfect face, and in her figure that pulsed with health and with life, there was a charm too alluring, almost aphrodisiac.

Of the emotions that it aroused, the girl was aware. It mortified her extremely, and

through her demeanour she tried to attenuate it. But from her voice, which was naturally low, she could not always banish caresses. She could not always eliminate the incandescence from her eyes. The more demure she tried to appear, the more desirable she became. Her prayer was, perhaps, only too fully granted.

Now, on this late mid-April afternoon, there came through the open windows the surrenders of spring, and the metallic roar of the city.

"If you won't marry me, tell me why?" Welden was saying.

With that air of being somebody which certain New Yorkers occasionally attain, he sat, supple and vigorous, looking hungrily at her. The hunger, a hunger for her, for a year and a day he had tried to appease, but hitherto quite vainly.

In and about the girl's lips a smile hovered deliciously.

"Supposing you wearied of me, what then?"

Welden laughed. "I never could."

The hovering smile fluttered and fled. "Supposing, then, I wearied of you!"

Welden laughed again. "I would not let you."

To that, the girl, with a movement of her head, assented.

"Perhaps. But does it not rather seem that affection is a thing which cannot be commanded? It seems so to me. It seems to me that it commands us. It seems to me too, that, the quantity being limited, some day it must give out. When it does, love ends. No effort can prevent it."

Welden nodded. "Some day, yes. But a hundred years with you would be insufficient for me. I could love you all through this life, and all through another."

The smile which momentarily had gone from the girl, rejoined her.

“‘In æternum te adorabo,’” she quoted. “I know. I have heard it before. I have heard it said by people who, when I next heard of them, were applying for a divorce. I heard Rivers swear it to Beatrix Leroy. Where are they now?”

“In the hands of their lawyers, I believe.”

“Yet, almost the day before yesterday, they were apparently mad about each other, quite as much as we are, and probably more. Now, as you put it, they are in the hands of their lawyers. Then there are, or were, the Cottings, the Colvilles, the Methuens, the Lennox Joneses. Where are they?”

“In the same box, I suppose. But what of it? What have their various deviltries to do with us?”

“Everything. We might get in the same box ourselves.”

“Ce n’est pas la mer à boire,” Welden lapsing into French, as certain New Yorkers sometimes will, replied.

Again the girl assented. "For a man, certainly not. But for a woman, it rather proclaims the fact that she has put her love and life into the hands of an individual who has destroyed the one and ruined the other. Women endure much, and I could endure that on condition, however, that I alone were aware of it. But, to have it known, printed, discussed; to have my private misfortunes public property, no, I would rather—"

The girl hesitated as though at loss for a simile. Before she could find one, provided, that is, she wanted to, Welden cut in.

"But, Maud, are you not putting the tilbury before the tandem? That people do get divorces is obvious and in the majority of cases the reason is obvious also. Men here, as a rule, marry too young. They marry because they cannot decently get the girl otherwise, and as they afterward discover, it is not the girl, but a girl that they have got. To me, you are not a girl; you are the

girl, the one girl in the whole wide world.”

Maud looked the matter over as it reached her, and indicated the flaw in it with a smile.

“We are taught that experience teaches, and I may suppose that you have had yours, many experiences, I dare say. In that case, you have had a liberal education, which I have lacked. Your experiences have qualified you as an expert, and it is as such that you are able to decide that I am the one girl in the world for you. That is very gratifying. But what is there to enable me to determine that you are the one man? You may be. Probably you are. But how can I tell? How can I?”

Sagaciously Welden answered: “Try me.”

Maud turned away, and with her two hands made a pass in the air. It was as though in some rite known but to herself, she were interrogating the invisible lap of the indifferent gods.

Then, looking suddenly at him, she exclaimed: "I have a great mind to."

In spite of a gesture meant to stay him, Welden sprang at the girl, caught her in his arms, and pressing his lips to hers, so bent her with the embrace, that she fell backward on the sofa.

At once, freeing herself, she pushed him away.

"Oblige me by sitting where you were."

As she spoke, she went to the mirror, re-adjusted her hat, patted her frock. These operations concluded, she turned again.

"We may as well say that we are engaged. In that manner we can be together whenever we like. Come to dinner to-morrow. I will speak to my father to-night, you can speak to him then."

She moved back. "Don't kiss me here. Don't. Now you must go. I have to dress."

Welden passed from the library into a reception room which adjoined it, and from

there to the marble flagging of the hall.

Near the entrance stood a man, an old family servant who had known Welden throughout the year and the day of the siege and who now handed him his hat and stick.

Welden, considering him with laughing eyes, fumbled in his waistcoat and said:

"William, put that in your pocket and don't be surprised if you hear any news."

"Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Welden," the man answered knowingly. "I shan't be surprised; no, sir."

Opening the door, he held it open until Welden reached the street.

That night, when some guests had gone, Maud spoke, as she said she would speak, to her father. They were in the drawing-room which, after a New York fashion of long ago, was frescoed, furnished in yellow and black, fitted with enormous mirrors and with chandeliers almost as big, equally ancient.

"I am engaged to Gerard Welden."

General Barhyte, who had taken up an evening paper, put it down and removed his glasses. He had bushy white hair, a white cavalry moustache, and a fierce red face which suddenly could become indulgent.

It became so then. The Weldens had been identified with New York as long as the Barhytes, possibly longer. Welden himself represented all that was locally desirable in addition to the fact that he was personally agreeable, pleasant to the eye, liked by men, admired by women, a man of means, an M. F. H., President of the Swordsmen Club.

These items considered, the general replaced his glasses and looked up at his daughter.

"He is not in business, is he?"

Maud, who had been standing, seated herself on an S in upholstery.

"Well? And you? You are not either."

For a moment the general considered the point. "That's another story. I think now-

adays a man should have some occupation."

Maud smiled, displaying the nacre of her teeth. "So do I. He will have me. It will be enough for him."

"Or for anybody," laughed the general. "When is it to be?"

"When is what to be?"

"Why, God bless my soul, the wedding, of course."

From under the girl's skirt a white slipper, butterflyed with gold, moved in and out.

"Oh, not for a long time yet."

"Why?"

"Because."

The general laughed again. "That is the best reason in the world. Well, puss, you have my consent and your mother's money. You have been a good girl and I hope to God that you will be happy. He means to say a word to me, doesn't he?"

Maud stood up. "To-morrow. I have asked him to dinner."

General Barhyte, gathering again the evening paper, nodded. The match was everything he could wish. The more he considered it, the more he was pleased.

The following evening, when Maud had left the table and Welden had said the promised word, that pleasure he expressed.

"I hope," he added, "that after you are married you will be willing to live here. Why, God bless my soul, the house is big enough for a dozen of you. I always breakfast in my rooms, usually I have luncheon at the Athenæum, and I have always wanted to dine there."

"You are very kind, General," Welden, sitting, smiling and supple, before him, replied. "Personally I shall like nothing better, particularly as my own house has gone the way the rest of New York will go—engulfed by office buildings and department stores."

"Yes, yes. They are making the town im-

possible. God bless my soul, if I did not know better, I should think I was in Chicago. But there is Maud looking in. Don't let me detain you."

Welden stood up, shook hands with the old gentleman, thanked him again, and followed the girl into the faded splendours of the drawing-room.

"I have something for you," she announced.

From a little box she took a sapphire, flat and oblong. About it was a thin gold band and at one end a clasp. On the band was engraved: *Aultre n'auray*.

"'None but you,'" she translated as he examined the device which, long ago, a girl wove for a king.

"Now," she resumed, "if you will put that on the stem of your watch, it will not be offensive, will it?"

"On the contrary. But how odd!"

"I meant it to be. It is a token between

us. If you ever change your mind, do not let me see that you have and do not tell me. Send this to me."

"It will go with me to my grave," Welden answered.

Drawing her to him, he kissed her, longly at first, then so penetratingly that the least pulses of her being shook.

Slowly, in her low, caressing voice, the girl said to him: "Dearest, I adore you."

III

A LITTLE LOVE

In the way we live now, the income derived from two million dollars is better than nothing, but, for a duke and a duchess, it is little more. Yet in Paris, provided one know, money may be made to do double the duty that it can effect elsewhere.

Malakoff did know. The last price of anything, the real value of no matter what, he thoroughly understood. It was a boast of his that no one could do him, and apart from the welshings in the steeplechase, it is probable that he had never been jockeyed in his life. On the perhaps meagre income he succeeded, consequently, in setting up an establishment which, if not princely, was not

bourgeois. He succeeded even in setting up two of them, one at Deauville for the villégiatura, another for town life in the Avenue Malakoff—"my avenue," as he, with what perhaps was pardonable pride, described it.

The house there or, to speak French, the hôtel, had been obtained at a rental relatively low. Situated between court and garden, it had a vanilla frontage, variegated at the windows by a touch of green, at the balcony by another of pink, which gave it vaguely the appearance of a Neapolitan ice.

Sally did not take to it nor did she take to her existence there. In the unholy rites of the marriage, each one of which had set a separate mark upon her, she felt cheated of her girlhood and, in this house, she felt cheated, too, of happiness and love. Many are without suspecting it, many others cheat themselves. But Sally had been thrown blindfolded into the arms of a man who did not care for her, who did not want to care

for her, and she had been so thrown for no other earthly reason than that a stupid woman might be related to a duke. Sally hated her mother for it with a hatred which equalled, when it did not exceed, the loathing which she felt for her husband.

Ordinarily the results of a husband's inconsiderateness are but temporary. Given but time and the bride forgets and forgives, and Sally, who was not only shallow, but, like all shallow people, impulsive, might have ended by loving the man whom she loathed, had not his inconsiderateness been succeeded by defection. Barely a wife, she ceased to be one, and that, while distinctly a blessing, aborted the possibility of anything further between them, anything, that is, except indifference on his part and antipathy on hers.

Her thoughts at this time were not, therefore, very gay, and their lack of gaiety was complicated by the fact that she had not

many of them. But she found compensations, among these a curious one in Mme. Oppenheim, who, for obvious reasons, had determined that Sally should like her, and who succeeded in that which, other things being equal, would have been an impossible task. Sally did like her, or perhaps it will be more exact to say that she relished the attentions shown her by this woman of the world, who, not content with being merely gracious to an inexperienced American, took the trouble to form her, to teach her the tone, the ways and manners of the Parisian, in particular that *désir de plaire* which gives to the speech and bearing of the mondaine her untranslatable charm.

Sally at first was necessarily unaware of the relations that existed between this woman and Malakoff. When she was better informed, as she promptly became, she felt grateful to her for standing between them.

The gratitude was very feline. Though

Sally purred, she could scratch. But meanwhile discovering, moreover, as she also did, that in the special world in which she moved, the situation, far from being exceptional, was the reverse, she felt not merely grateful but Parisian, and in that state of advancement, dispensed both with the sense of dignity which should be natural to the married woman, and with the sense of morality which usually is instinctive in the young.

Incidentally it amused her to be duchess. She was glad to be rid of her mother. She liked to drive without her, and view landscapes of modes. Moreover, in the Avenue Malakoff, she received detachments from what is called All-Paris—the glittering and rakish ship of fashion, in which the distaff-side of the Faubourg Saint-Germain does not always deign to sail. But though the feminine portion of the old nobility has its reserves, the men are less punctilious and even otherwise there are always others quite

as agreeable and frequently more so, the cosmopolitan leaders of life and sport, who nowhere else are as enterprising. Of these, many made up to her, a circumstance of which, quaintly enough, she complained to Mme. Oppenheim.

"But, *ma toute belle*," the latter remonstrated. "When a man delays more than fifteen minutes in making up to me, I regard him as insulting."

"You are so beautiful," Sally replied. But she thought her simply fantastic, and that not through any straight-lacedness, but because she did not yet understand how a woman can permit any man, save the man of all men, to attempt an approach however circuitous, to the heart's tender places. In that respect, Malakoff's treatment of her had been beneficial, and while in the antipathy incited, it had necessarily failed to reveal what love may be, none the less it had suggested possibilities which were then ac-

centuated by Welden's presence in Paris.

Prior to her marriage, she had fancied herself in love with him. Now, in looking back, she realised that she had not known the meaning of the word. It still held its secrets, mysteries unrevealed, the esoteric love of a doctrine which only life can impart, only life and a lover. But the latter term had also its shadings, between which Sally wavered, not through any loyalty to Malakoff, she owed him none; nor through any loyalty to herself, she was unaware that she owed any, but because Welden was an inaccessible person.

At a five-o'clock in that amiable region which is known as the American colony, Sally made him such little tentative advances as a woman may. Agilely he extracted himself from her ambushes. Ordinarily, he might have stormed them. That would have been only civil. But what ordinarily would have been civil, in this instance, would have been base. He was bound by bonds

that to certain natures are the strongest of all. Apart from which he had no desire to encourage Sally. Maud left him none.

A fortnight after the episode of the little token, the girl and her father sailed for Paris. Welden accompanied them and it was in Paris that the consummation of the agreement occurred.

Previously the matter was somewhat debated. Maud Barhyte knew many things, among others, that once upon a time it had been heretical to think, heretical, also, to love. She knew, furthermore, that since then progress had liberated thought without, however, completely emancipating the heart. But, she had argued, the right to think and the right to love being both fundamental in human nature, one is as clear as the other, and while, to the bigot, any freedom in love may be heretical still, none the less, such liberty is permissible, provided the appearances are preserved, and no one else is injured.

These views she put before Welden. Their fallacy was patent to him. For while the whole moral value of marriage may subsist in a union which is contracted solely in the consciences of those who enter into it, and while such a union may not only present but preserve the entire and eternal law of Right, yet, when such a union is contracted in conditions such as theirs, there is an injury to others. There is an injury, though it be but potential, to the unborn. There is a further injury, and a grave one, to the woman, often, also, to the man. A woman is never completely woman except in the family, and there can be no family once certain conventions are contravened. These conventions, which jurists did not invent, or codes originate, are exterior to woman, superior to man, and, when disregarded, inimical to both of them.

But, though the fallacy of the girl's views was patent to Welden, the fallacy of refut-

ing them was patent as well. The rare gifts of the gods should be piously accepted, never refused. Apart from which, in the way we live now, men of the world do not recite moral maxims after the manner of Confucius. Welden was too modern for that, and incidentally too hungry. But he saved his conscience.

"Your views," he declared, "are as adorable as they are advanced; but they would be still more adorable were they antiquated enough to induce you to marry me."

"Dearest," she replied, "have we not been all over that?"

They had indeed. At the time they were in New York. In the after joy which love and life in Paris brought, neither, between them, could have discovered a regret, the vain desire merely that it should never end, never! and in a world where all things must and do.

Meanwhile felicity was theirs, one so full,

so absorbing, so intense and eager that sometimes from their commingled breath, rose the deceiving image of felicities larger and more fair. Sometimes, from the fountain of delight, a clear jet falling in drizzling sheaves, shook stars in their eyes and ears. Sometimes the pulsations of love swept over them like tides. Sometimes the waters lifted them, sank them, lowered them deeper, caught, carried and drifted them, hour long, unappeasably, from night to dawn. Once, from the mysterious affinities that similarise the flesh and spirit, a fear seemed to mount and warn of a catastrophe unknown, yet near.

The latter impression, wholly momentary and immediately forgot, came later. At the time being, their clear sky was cloudless. Intermediately, for general convenience, they were but another engaged couple, and it was by the simple expedient of announcing the engagement that Welden, at a five-

o'clock in the Avenue Marceau, extricated himself from Sally's ambuscades.

"To Maud Barhyte!" exclaimed Sally, who certainly took her defeat very well, "how perfectly dear! I was thinking of her only the other day."

Sally, like her mother, sometimes spoke truly. In this instance, what she said was exact. She had been thinking of a resemblance that existed between Mme. Oppenheim and Maud.

"Where is she?" she continued. "And where are you? I want you both to dinner."

"Thank you," Welden replied. "Maud is at the Mirifique, in the rue de la Paix, and I am across the street."

"How nice and convenient that is. Well, tell her with my love, that I am coming to see her at once."

Sally smiled and nodded and turned. "Bonjour, Madame de Chose!" she said to a woman. "Bonjour, Prince!" she repeated

to a man. "How sweet you look, Pinkey?" she added to a girl. "Bonjour! Bonjour!"

Sally certainly took her defeat very well. In the crowded salons of Mrs. Cawtree, her hostess, a New Yorker who had lived so long in Paris, that she was unaware how Parisian New York has become; in the spacious and peopled rooms she looked far more victorious than vanquished, and incidentally very sweet. "But too animated," Mrs. Cawtree, to whom such attenuations were pleasing, afterward declared.

Welden fell back and away. Presently in a motor-cab he was sailing down the Champs Elysées, and on to the Cercle de l'Escrime, a fencing club, of which he was a member, where, when in Paris, he usually went for a bout each day.

The bout served a double purpose. It combined practice and pleasure. It did more. It helped to keep him in that condition of supple vigour which it is the mere

duty of an idler and particularly of a lover to maintain. To this condition other causes were contributory. He had a hack for the Bois and near Longchamp he kept a hunter, one that he had bought, not indeed for any immediate sport, but for future runs on Long Island. This horse, Irish by birth, and Blazes by name, was strong enough to carry a house. He had short legs, a short back, prodigious quarters, shoulders like the top of a haystack, and an impudent eye. He had cost a pretty figure, but Welden, who knew as much about horses as any one can, except a vet., felt that he had got him cheap, and to his Longchamp groom, a middle-aged, weasel-faced man, he gave these simple and sound instructions: "Mind you, now, plenty of oats and plenty of work."

On this afternoon, in the *salle d'armes*, he found, among other members, Louis Le Hillel, a Franco-American, to whom, through

his grandmother, he was vaguely related, and with whom he had long been on terms of agreeable, though not oppressive, intimacy. Le Hillel had the face of a prelate, the manners of a débutante, and a wildcat's fearless agility.

After a bout with him, after a shower bath, and after dressing for the evening in the club, as is customary there, Welden sailed away in another cab to dine with Maud and her father.

The Mirifique, where they lodged, had been considered smart in the days of Balzac's beaux, and that distinction it had contrived to maintain. But then it had not succumbed to the general teutonising of such places. The management was not German, the servants were not Swiss, the chef was a chef. Though situated on that most cosmopolitan of streets, which the rue de la Paix is, it remained really Parisian. Guests there were not considered fit merely to be

robbed, but patrons to be pleased. Mainly these patrons were Russians, than which, in the managerial eye, there is nothing superior, save only those appertaining to some *grrande famille Américaine*, for that is the ideal, and that is what the Barhytes were.

The suite which they occupied was on what Italians call the noble floor, and which the French, less translatably, describe as the first above. It gave on the street, and consisted of a vestibule, a frescoed salon, a tapestried dining-hall, and the usual sleeping rooms. The general's quarters, and those of his daughter, were separated by the dining room and salon. But Maud's had that which the general's lacked, a private entrance. It gave on a stairway at the rear, and though it was supposed to be used only by Maud's maid, Maud herself made use of it when returning unduly from Welden.

When he entered that evening, there was mounting from the street its odour of ver-

ben and absinthe. Following that, were the cries of the hawkers who are never still. Then at once there was a waiter announcing dinner.

Already Welden had been greeted by the general. For a moment he had held Maud's hand in his. Slender, white and very cool, it burned him. The contour of her figure and her too alluring looks, burned him still more. At the pressure of his hand on hers, she, too, must have burned. A faint flame leaped to her face, coloured it charmingly, and sank slowly away.

"And where, may one inquire, have you been?" she asked, with that clinging intonation of hers, which was a caress in itself, and which lent to her simplest words the effect of a kiss. "We rather fancied that we should see you."

"So we did," said the general. "But dinner appears to be ready. Welden, will you take Maud out?"

"I have been talking to a friend of yours," Welden presently remarked, unfolding, as he spoke, a beautifully folded napkin. "Sugar Candy, she wants us to dine."

"That is Sam Kandy's daughter, isn't it?" the general interjected. "Let me see, she married—"

"A very good looking man, I hear," Maud answered. "Have you met him?" she asked, turning to Welden.

"That reminds me, Maud," the general ran on. "At the Visitors' Club to-day, a Frenchman, a painter, was introduced to me. It appears that he has seen you somewhere. God bless my soul! What an extravagant mood you put him in! He wants to paint your portrait and he says that if he may, it will be the clou—what do you call it in English—the success? Yes, the success of the Salon. A most extravagant chap. It was Colonel Floyd who introduced him. By the way, Floyd wants us to go to Fras-

cati's. He is to be there for July and he says—"

"Frascati's at Hâvre?" said Maud.

"Yes, where else should it be? Now how devilish good that fish is, isn't it? They do do you well here, don't they? Floyd says—"

The general rambled on. Dishes perfectly cooked, perfectly served, succeeded each other. Coffee came. Finally the general stood up.

"Welden," he said, "don't let me disturb you. Stop and keep Maud company."

He turned to the girl. "I have an engagement with Floyd. Shall you be up when I return?"

"Ah! that depends."

"God bless my soul! Of course it does. I hardly believe I shall be late, though. Good night, Welden."

The old gentleman passed on and out, wondering a little, as he occasionally did, why, as yet, no date had been set for the

wedding. Had he known, apoplexy would have seized him. But he did not know, and fortunately never learned. Fortunately for us all there are mysteries that we never elucidate. In its inscrutable ways the Inscrutable is beneficent.

IV

A LITTLE FRISK

The multiple brilliancies of the table were punctuated by goblets which lackeys in silk stockings, knee breeches and the saffron liveries of the Malakoffs replenished with gloved hands. A maître d'hôtel, after presenting a sturgeon from the Volga, was supervising its service. Through the hum of talk, the tinkle of silver on Sèvres, above the glittering table, rose the rich voice of the duke.

At his right was Mme. de Solférino, gorgeous and golden. At his left was Mme. de Cérisy, a massive brunette, outwardly attentive, but inwardly blaspheming. Next to her was de Dol, a sportsman with racing stables at Chantilly. Farther down was

Welden. Opposite de Dol was Aquaviva, an Italian, master of the Roman hunt. At his right sat Maud. Beyond, at the other end of the table, was Sally, a Turkish legate on one side, a Russian prince on the other.

Between Sally and Malakoff, were eight other guests, or sixteen in all, a number relatively restricted, but, afterward, there was to be a sauterie, a little frisk, to which a hundred more were coming.

Mme. de Cérisy, outwardly smiling, but inwardly cursing her couturière, wore a confection that matched her name. It did not do and the consciousness that it did not was increased doubly, first by the glitter of Mme. de Solférino, again by the picture presented by Maud, who, with the ivory of her neck and arms, the rich orange of her hair, her incandescent eyes and too alluring looks, seemed a dream and a despair.

Malakoff, turning from Mme. de Cérisy to her, moistened his lips.

To annoy him, Mme. de Cérisy remarked: "Giselle Oppensheim is not with us to-night."

"Unfortunately no," he answered. "She was awaited elsewhere."

It was a fortnight after the episode at Mrs. Cawtree's. On the afternoon that followed the little skirmish, Sally called at the Mirifique, and finding Maud at home, embraced her, congratulated her, and asked her and Welden to dinner, an invitation which she later reinforced by another, begging both to come to her at Deauville, from the third to the tenth of July. The two bids had been jointly accepted, and it was in response to the first, that Maud and Welden were then dining at her house.

At the moment, Malakoff was addressing himself to Maud. Welden could not hear what he said, but in spite of intervening candelabra, he could see the girl's face. She was smiling, apparently amused.

Welden felt no jealousy, nothing but the calm of invincible possession, and, as he ate of farcied truffles, which had just been served, and drank the blonde wine with which his glass was constantly replenished, he told himself that in a few hours the girl would be in his arms.

Some vibration of the thought must have reached Sally. Leaning forward, she called at him.

"Isn't she radiant? In New York she was exquisite, here she is exquisite and radiant besides. What has done it? Is it love? Is it? Ah, alors! Qui donc m'apprendra ce que c'est que l'amour?"

With that, a nod and a ripple of laughter, Sally turned to Cantire, an under secretary of the British Embassy, a boy with pink cheeks and fair hair.

The dinner proceeded. Courses succeeded each other. Sweets came and went. Sol-

emly the butler approached Sally and muttered at her.

But Sally, her attention diverted, had not heard. Presently she looked up.

"Well, Harris, what is it?"

The man muttered again.

"On arrive!" cried Sally, rising. "The others are coming! They are here!"

From beyond floated a kiss of harps that were marrying violins to the strain of a waltz; Malakoff, rising also, bent to Mme. de Solférino, and, her hand on his arm, led the way from the brilliant room, to rooms more brilliant.

In a little, though, marshalled by him, Welden, Cantire, Aquaviva and de Dol returned to the table, where cigars and liqueurs were being served, and where other men joined them.

"Monsieur Welden," Malakoff called from where he stood. "You know the Mar-

quis Aquaviva de Santamarta, the Comte de Dol and M. Cantire."

Then as the men nodded, collectively he added:

"Messieurs, this gentleman, a compatriot of the duchess, is a renowned sportsman. Should he consent to enter, in all conscience, I may say, have a care."

"Thank you," said Welden, biting the end from a cigar. "But enter what?"

"A little run over the sticks at de Dol's," Cantire, in English, replied.

"Permit me," said the count, approaching. He had honest eyes, a slight moustache, and a careful manner. "Monsieur," he continued to Welden, "at Chantilly, I have some stables, oh, nothing to speak of, but a little stretch which is, perhaps, sufficient, and these gentlemen, with Kara Saraguine, whom I do not see at this moment, have been arranging a hurdle-race for the sixth. If now you, monsieur, will be amiable enough to enter,

it will become truly an international run. Prince Kara is Russian, the Marquis Aquaviva is—”

“I should like nothing better,” Welden cut in. “But on the sixth, I have arranged to be at M. de Malakoff’s.”

“And most amiable it is of you,” Malakoff exclaimed. “I thank you infinitely, but—”

“I have also,” Cantire, in English, interrupted. “We can send our horses to Chantilly before we go, and run up from Deauville together.”

“Voyons!” said Malakoff. “Shall we not talk French? De Dol does not understand, or Aquaviva either.”

“Pardon, yes, a very little,” the count softly interposed. Then lapsing serenely into French he added: “As a baby, I studied it with my nurse.”

“It is arranged then?” said Aquaviva to Welden. He had a full beard, pursed lips,

and an air of being very much pleased with everything. "You will join us, is it not so?"

Welden, turning to him, with his laughing eyes, nodded. "Yes, thanks, it ought to be very good fun."

"Well, then, what would a little cut at baccarat say to you, messieurs?" Malakoff in his rich voice inquired. "Ah! behold Cantire, who abandons us now."

For Cantire, rightly preferring the nobler possibilities of captivating women, to the more sordid chance of winning gold, was then making for the frisk.

"A hundred louis," Malakoff resumed. "It is I who am banker. If you please, this way."

He motioned at a footman and a door was opened to a fumoir where an oval table was set, and where presently Welden, to whom he dealt practically nothing but eights and nines, relieved him of a major portion of the money.

Malakoff laughed and got up. "Bah! Another time it will be my turn."

But now Aquaviva took the bank. Other men, drifting in, staked against him. Welden continued to play and continued to win. Meanwhile Malakoff had gone. De Dol, too, had disappeared. Of the original party only Aquaviva and Welden remained. Finally Welden himself stood up, and, guided by the harps, entered the room that served for the frisk.

It was large and luminous. The polished floor was swept by trains undulant and glistening. There were black coats from the lapels of which hung clusters of minute decorations; white shirts which the broad ribbons of higher orders enhanced. Bare shoulders and jewelled necks emerged from pearl embroidered corsages. Coils of hair, bitten by combs, gleamed with hereditary gems. There was the sheen of silk, of diamonds and of flesh. There was, too, an aroma of orris

and flowers which, while a trifle voluptuous, was also a little heavy. But over it, above everything, there mounted that atmosphere which is the marked characteristic of such assemblies, the vaporisation of a sentiment shared by all, that of being among oneself, and of being thereby generally and solidly united by nothing whatever.

In the centre of the room, couples were turning. Beyond, in a doorway that led to other salons, Sally stood talking to Cantire. Opposite, on the other side of the room, high windows that descended to the floor, opened on a balcony.

Welden moved on. He did not see Maud, and in search of her, he went to the nearest of these windows. In front of it, her back to the balustrade, the girl stood talking to Malakoff. She was looking down and did not see him, and Malakoff, who was facing her, did not either.

Tranquilly and courteously he approached.

“Without indiscretion, if I am not interrupting—”

Maud looked up, and Malakoff looked around.

“I beg of you,” said the latter.

“Would you care for a turn?” asked Welden, who, as he spoke, nodded and smiled at both of them.

“Voilà!” Malakoff exclaimed. “You remind me. I also have my duties. Mademoiselle!” Moving aside, he bowed.

“Sans adieu,” Maud called to him over her shoulder, and accompanied by Welden passed on and in.

There Welden put an arm about her and together they began gliding and reversing with that ease, which, in all the cosmopolitan world of fashion, Americans best display. As they floated over the floor, others, who were also waltzing, stopped to observe them, noticing which they stopped themselves.

“Let us go in there,” said Welden, indi-

cating the door at which, a moment before, Sally had stood.

It led to a smaller room, delicately fitted, where, however, they were not alone. Other people, Parisians with whom they were unacquainted, were seated or standing about. But, near the entrance, was an unoccupied sofa, on which Maud sank and Welden dropped.

The girl unfurled a fan. "Dearest, do you know, Malakoff talks really rather well."

Welden nodded. "He isn't such a bad sort. I won a pot of money of him to-night. By the way, I am in for a race. It is to be on the sixth—"

Further confidences were interrupted. In the doorway Cantire appeared, looking eagerly about.

"Oh, Miss Barhyte," he cried, as he spotted the girl. "Won't you give me this dance, or at least, what's left of it?"

Maud, rising, took the boy's arm, and Welden, who had also risen, dropped back.

The pot of money which he had won, while inconsequential, was an assistance. There had been a very inconveniencing crash in Wall street. That morning he had meditated wiring there and having the proceeds of July coupons and dividends cabled to his Paris account. But now, meanwhile, the pot, however relatively small, was a help. Mechanically he felt of the pocket in which he had placed it.

As he did so, Maud reappeared. Other confidences ensued, which, as before, were interrupted. A new aspirant for a turn came to the girl. After the second, there was a third, then there were more. For in the minds of men, however obtuse, her beauty put a restlessness, a trouble, sometimes a hope. Those who were free coveted the possibilities it evoked; those who were not

ruminated the savourousness of those possibilities.

"Dearest," she said at last. "Shall we go?"

"Yes, à l'Anglaise," Welden answered, expressing in the language of the land its neat equivalent for the English "French leave."

"Dearest," she remonstrated, "I at least must say a word."

In search of Sally, on through the ball room she passed, surrounded by homages, enveloped by the glances of men.

Presently, after the word had been said, and her cloak had been put about her, she went down through a double hedge of lackeys to the perron below, where her lover waited and a footman bawled:

"The people of Madame la princesse de Solférino!"

Very gorgeous, very smiling, the princess, formerly Fanny Murray of New York, in-

interrupted her luminous exit to remark to them: "Hasn't it been jolly?"

When she, her glitter and her platitudes had gone, the footman bawled again, this time for Welden's carriage.

About the entrance was a group of grooms, idlers, birds of the night. Down the avenue glowed the lamps of waiting cars and broughams. Before these a sergent-de-ville, his head bent, his hands behind his back, promenaded Napoleonically. Above, the moon hung, a round of butter in the sky. In the air was a sweetness, and from the open windows sank the swooning measures of a waltz.

Welden, after putting Maud into the carriage, drew from a pocket of his white waistcoat a chainless watch, from the stem of which her token, the sapphire, dangled.

"You have had no supper. Suppose we go somewhere and take a private room?"

With a quick intake of the breath, the

girl answered: "Dearest, yes, and let us hurry."

"The Café de la Paix," Welden threw at the coachman's back. "Et vivement!"

Then, in a moment, when he was beside her, the girl withdrew a glove, put her hand in his and whispered:

"Dearest, I am so happy that it frightens me."

"Yes," Welden replied. "I know. I, too, am afraid."

"You!"

"In any love affair there are always three. The third is the unknown. It is that which frightens."

What he meant he could not have told. The remark, passably oracular, had but sprung into the sudden utterance, which, occasionally, prophecies take. Dismissed at the time in immediate embraces, afterward it was shudderingly recalled.

V

THE VILLA PORTUGAISE

To the cosmopolite, Deauville is delightful. The days fall by in an atmosphere dripping with ammonia and desire, scented with caprices and brine, shuttled too by that general deviltry, which those consorts of society, wealth and idleness, inevitably produce.

The house there which the Malakoffs had taken was known as the Villa Portugaise. The reason of that was inscrutable. Instead of the patio, loggia, fountains and blooms which the name implied, there was a trim lawn fronting a thoroughly English dwelling that looked obliquely at the sea.

In spite of the Britannic reserve of its appearance, there was in it an ease, an entire liberty, a complete *sans-gêne* that harmonised very perfectly with the Deauvillian air.

On the ground floor were the living rooms,

spacious, cool, perhaps a trifle severe. These gave on the ocean. On the lawn side was a wide hall that extended from one end of the house to the other. In the centre was the entrance. At the right of the doorway was a table on which were reviews, papers, periodicals. Above it was a rack in which letters were put. To the left of the entrance, at the extreme end, a flight of steps started, continued for a few steps, then halting, turned abruptly and directly up to a galleried floor above where the bedrooms were, which for general convenience had been numbered.

When, on the evening of the third of July, Maud and Welden arrived, they were met in the hall by Sally, by Malakoff, the Cérists, the Solférinos and a dozen others, among whom was Cantire.

The boy, attired in beautifully cut evening clothes, looked hot, or rather red. Mme. de Cérisy, taking advantage of his youth, had put to him questions which even at Deau-

ville were perhaps indiscreet. Mrs. Cawtree, who had come over from her own very neighbourly villa, had overheard and was laughing.

"Hasten, my children," Sally, after the first greetings, called in French. "We dine and at once."

Maud was then taken to No. 10, a room at the head of the stairs. Opposite was No. 12. It was there Welden was shown. The arrangement was so convenient that he congratulated himself on its idyllic simplicity.

A little later when he and Maud had dressed and both were about to descend the stair, they could hear Sally exclaiming.

In her hand was a blue rag of a telegram on which a string of typewritten words had been gummed.

"What is it?" Malakoff asked.

"Giselle Oppensheim who wires that she comes to-morrow. But where shall I put her? Where?"

“Bah!” answered Malakoff. “It will arrange itself. On s’avisera.”

Mrs. Cawtree, who knew everything, everything fashionably knowable that is, looked admiringly at Sally. It was not every bride and particularly it was not every American bride, who was capable of being so indulgently sans-façon. Mrs. Cawtree’s esteem for Sally mounted. But at once an attenuation followed. Probably she does not know, the lady reflected.

“Do you fancy that the duchess knows about Mme. Oppenheim?” she asked of Cantire when presently she found him next to her at dinner.

“Knows what?” the boy inquired, choking down as he spoke, the velvet of a bisque.

“I remind myself,” Mrs. Cawtree inconsequentially resumed, “of the woman who asked Dumas whether there was anything between him and the Princess Belgioso.

‘Madam,’ he replied, ‘sometimes nothing whatever.’ ”

It was a moment before Cantire got it. When he did he laughed in a fashion so disorderly that to steady him, Mrs. Cawtree asked him to a frisk at her house the next night.

The effort succeeding, she turned with a similar invitation to Aquaviva who was opposite, after which she asked Prince Saraguine who sat between her and Sally.

Kara Saraguine had an air of having lived extensively and of fully intending to continue such living. At the moment he was eating mussels from the sauce of a sole Normande and while listening to Sally’s chatter, had an eye on Maud, who sat a little beyond, on the other side of the table.

“That youthfulness is ravishing,” he remarked and wiped his mouth. “A compatriot, Duchess? One could devour her.”

Cantire’s eyes were now on the girl, so

were Malakoff's and Solférino's, and Maud, knowing of old the ideality of men's thoughts, blushed suddenly and divinely.

But at once, for countenance' sake, leaning forward, she called, in English, to Sally.

"What sort of a place is Etretat? While I was dressing they brought me a telegram from my father. He is to motor there from Frascati's to-morrow. Is it nice?"

"Charming!" Saraguine volunteered in French. "The downs, the cliffs, the view, whatever you will, is charming, except the world there. No, frankly, Mademoiselle, that is everything there is of most grocer."

"Etretat!" Solférino, also in French, exclaimed. "I promenaded myself once that way. Once, that is permissible, twice would be a sin. And I, I am not exacting. I—"

Solférino ran on. Presently everybody seemed to be talking at once. Momentarily Maud's too alluring looks were forgotten. But when the dinner was over, several men

gathered in the hall about her and there remained until drawn into the fumoir, where Welden was the last to follow and where, afterward, with the hopelessness of a regret that is to be eternal, he wished he had never gone.

There, a footman was trundling a chest on wheels. In it were cigars of different shades and sizes, cigarettes of various brands. As Welden entered, the man steered it up to him. He took a londrès and surveyed the room.

Near by was a buffet, hospitably inviting. On it were decanters of chartreuse and maraschino; flagons of brandy and gin; bottles of Vichy and Eau de Vals. These latter had obviously been attacked. But with that abstemiousness which is a characteristic of the way we live now, the liquors and liqueurs were untouched.

Contiguously was a billiard table on which Cantire, a cigar between his teeth, was knock-

ing balls about. Opposite on a sofa, raised by a dais, Solférino sprawled. He looked precisely like a fat old woman.

Idly Welden wondered why his wife had accepted him. She was a Murray. The Murrays were not brilliant. But in point of birth and, for that matter, of breeding, her family, like Maud's and like his own, were superior, in every way, to any imperial spawn.

He passed on. Beyond was the green baize of a baccarat table, about which now other men were grouped. Saraguine was dealing. The cards which he gave to the right, Aquaviva received; those to the left went to Malakoff. Behind these the others stood and punted.

Presently, Malakoff, to whom Saraguine had furnished an almost uninterrupted series of picture cards, got up, and Welden, after a circular look of inquiry, took the vacated chair.

The ill luck that had visited that side of the table continued. Across the way Aquaviva and his backers were winning. Meanwhile Welden and those behind him lost. Then, as is usual in such circumstances, the losers abandoning their positions, deserted to the favoured side and shortly, from the chair which Malakoff had relinquished, Welden was betting alone.

He had begun with hundred franc wagers. As these vanished, his stake increased. From a silk card case he drew blue and white notes, one after another, until all which it held were gone. Barring some loose gold in his waistcoat he had nothing.

"Je suis ratiboisé," he remarked. "I am cleaned out."

He was getting up, as Malakoff had done, when Saraguine, seeing his predicament and perhaps conscious that if he desisted, the game might cease, said to him:

"If you will, I beg of you, stake on parole."

"Thanks," Welden answered and resumed his seat. "A hundred louis."

The game proceeded. Cantire had left the billiard table. Solférino approached. Aquaviva, relinquishing his chair to de Cérisy, went to the buffet, drank largely of Vichy and walked away.

"Nine!" said Welden, exposing his cards.

"Eight!" said Saraguine, exposing his own.

"Nothing," said de Cérisy, pushing his cards aside.

Saraguine, after gathering in the money from that quarter, paid Welden and redealt.

For a while thereafter, fortune changed. The players that had deserted Welden returned. He recovered what he had lost and ten thousand francs in addition. Then luck veered. He staked the ten thousand, lost them and, a quarter of an hour later, had lost fifty thousand more.

Tranquilly, but this time definitely, he got from his seat, drank of the Vichy and went out in search of Maud.

In the hall women were grouped, talking modes and morals, the cosmopolitan gossip of London, Paris and Rome. Maud, a little removed from the others, was in a rocking chair, a slipper just visible beneath the hem of her skirt, her bare arms upraised behind her head.

Before her, Malakoff balanced himself on the arm of another chair. As Welden approached, he stood up.

"You won, I hope," he threw out, and sauntered away.

"As it happened I lost," Welden exclaimed, not to him, but to the girl. "I shall have to go to Paris to-morrow."

"Dearest, I have money, eight or nine hundred francs I think," Maud slowly, in her low, caressing voice, replied.

Welden laughed. "I could not take it and

even if I could, it would not be anywhere near enough. As it is I shall have to cable."

"Dearest, to-morrow is the Fourth, it is particularly for to-morrow we are here and in the evening Mrs. Cawtree wants us to come to her. Could you not put it off?"

"Not very comfortably. The money has to be paid at once, within the legal delays that is, and they amount to twenty-four hours. But I will be back in time for Mrs. Cawtree's. At the latest I can take a train which gets here at nine and to-night—"

"Dearest, be careful," the girl interrupted. Slowly she looked around. But they were quite alone. "Be sure first, won't you," she added, "that no one is about."

Welden ran his long thin fingers through his bright thick hair. Not for this world certainly and probably not either for the next, would he by so much as a gesture have compromised the girl.

Much later, after he had waited longly

and listened vainly and made two abortive attempts, when at last the villa seemed entirely hushed, he crossed the little space that lay between his room and hers.

The door was unlocked. As he opened it the disposition of the room was such that he could see of the girl only the rich orange of her hair, the outline of her pillowed head.

At the noise, ever so slight, which he made on entering, she turned. Immediately he heard, or thought he heard, a footfall in the corridor without. Quickly he closed the door and bolted it. It was, he noticed, massively made, of solid oak.

In the momentary uneasiness which, in circumstances such as these, even a problematic footfall may and does properly excite, he reflected that no one could get in and then immediately he told himself that no one would try.

VI

THE HEAD

The next evening Welden left Paris for Deauville. Ordinarily, as he had told Maud, he would have arrived at nine. But the derailment of another train interfered. It was eleven when he reached the villa.

A gale was blowing. From within, through the windows and the open door, lights fell on the driveway, chequering the pebbles with yellow spots. From beyond, in a lull of the wind, came the sound of violins and voices. The villa itself was silent.

As Welden entered, a footman came running. No one else was about. Turning, he passed on to the stairs and up them.

During the delay that had supervened he told himself that because of it, Maud, ceas-

ing to expect him, would have gone on to Mrs. Cawtree's, and it was with the idea of dressing and of joining her that he made for his room. But, while on the stair, it occurred to him to look in hers.

On reaching it, he turned the knob. The door was unlocked, it opened at his touch, and, precisely as on the night before, he saw the rich orange of her pillowed head, but saw too, beside her, Malakoff.

For a second only. Enveloped momentarily, yet, for the moment, enveloped absolutely by the catastrophic emotions of a whirlwind of nightmares, before he could move, the door, slammed in his face, was bolted.

In the instant concussion, the anchylosis of the anterior shock fell by, replaced immediately by blood madness.

Behind that door a man and a woman were occupied in continuing to be. Of that alone he was conscious. Over all the cells of

his brain a somnolence had fallen, over all, save one, and that one cell, vehemently active, was inciting him to tear with bare hands life from the man, that done, to tear it again from the woman.

But for the door he could and would have.

Violently he flung himself against it. Violently yet vainly, and before perhaps it were possible for him to have realised the futility of the effort, he did realise that some one was near him, somebody who had a hand on his arm and who was offensively interfering.

Savagely he turned. Before him, in ball dress, a fichu of lace about her head, was Sally.

"Don't," she was saying. "Don't."

Welden, maniacal still, could have struck her. She saw it. But she did not flinch. Though naturally agitated, she did not seem frightened, surprised merely and also uncertain.

Welden raised his hand with a movement

that threatened her, threatened the occupants of that room, menaced the house, Deauville itself, a gesture wide, insane, elemental and human.

"Don't," she repeated.

In the constant reiteration of that one word there must have been something of the effect of a spray. The irritability of the one active cell subsided, that of other cells was aroused.

Welden's arm fell at his side. He stared at Sally. Then, for the first time, one of his two selves recognised her.

Sally, discovering not that, but the altered attitude, faced him.

"He would not be there unless she wished."

The words fell over him plentifully like water thrown from a bucket. In the full douche and splatter of them, their meaning insinuated itself into the arteries of thought. The man's two selves, the objective and the

subconscious, rejoined each other; mania subsided, somnambulism ceased. Abruptly his entire brain awoke. The potential troglodyte that was in him, as potentially he is in us all, dematerialised. At once a man of the world in flannels and a straw hat found himself in the presence of a lady. That hat he removed.

In the eyes and about the mouth of the lady was an expression which some ladies have when they are occupied less with what they say than with other things which they do not propose to mention.

It was quite the same to Welden. That which occupied him was the ineluctable truth of her statement. Malakoff would not be there if Maud had not consented.

It was in a shrill whisper that Sally had produced it. Now, in the same tone, looking him still in the face, she said:

"Come below with me."

As she spoke she stooped, gathered the

train of her dress and together they descended the stair.

In the hall a footman stood. Sally left Welden and went to the table. Above it in a rack was a letter which she avidly took and put in her corsage. Then, turning, she spoke to the servant.

Welden, meanwhile, was still absorbed by her statement. But happiness was yet so recent that the ineluctable truth had not fully permeated all the cerebral convolutions, and the fact that it had not, manifested itself in the melodramatic phrase which all have uttered, all at least whom the unforeseen has felled.

"It is impossible; I am dreaming!"

At that, instantly, there surged before him the vision of the pillowed head, but now, through some miracle of hell, he could see the body, the fair ivory of it blotched with postules.

Again hæmatomania would have claimed

him. For a moment it was not only the vision that he saw but zigzags of black and scarlet. Determinedly he reacted. Almost immediately the natural poise of the man returned, with it as quickly came the realisation that since already he had done nothing, there was nothing that he or any other civilised being could do, except indeed to leave the house.

At the sure cognition of that he looked about for Sally. She was speaking to a maid.

"I am going," he told her.

Sally, from over her shoulder, nodded at him.

"So am I," she answered and went on with her orders.

"Perkins," she was saying, "M. de Malakoff is in number ten. Tell Harris to have two of the men remain near by until they see him leave it."

Welden wondered absently at her reply.

It was odd, he thought, that she also should be going. Then, as absently, he remembered that she was Malakoff's wife and he contemplated the fact gravely, without pity. It seemed to him just that besides himself some one else should suffer.

"And Perkins," Sally called at the now retreating woman. "Bring my jewel case and some things, enough for to-night."

"Come," she added to Welden, moving as she spoke to the door. "I am going to Mrs. Cawtree's. You had better go to the hotel, to the Roches Grises."

The weather, like themselves, had become dramatic. The high wind that swept the frivolity of the land, came from the sea, perhaps from the Pole. It was strong and rude and, as they issued from the house, it pounced on them, howling and gay as a pack of foxhounds.

Sally's clothes were lifted and tossed, the fichu was nearly torn from her head. She

dominated her dress however, maintained the bit of lace, and, as they went down the path, she called at Welden: "What shall you do to-morrow?"

The "to-morrow" was all he caught. The rest of the question the gale scattered before it reached him. But it was enough. It prompted. As yet he had not thought. Then at once he knew, and he determined to wire to Le Hillel and dispatch him, with some local acquaintance, to Malakoff.

Sally, fancying that he had not heard at all, cried at him again, repeating the question.

Welden, holding his hat on with one hand and pointing back at the house with the other, shouted: "I shall have friends of mine call there."

That was very satisfactory. Sally, her head bent, considered it gleefully. It was what she had hoped, an additional arrow for her quiver, in which already was divorce.

Presently she spoke again, but what she said Welden did not hear, did not care.

The sea, pounding on the shore, was creating a thunder deafening and confused. It was as though a gigantic machine were hastening terribly to some enormous task.

Sally, in despair of making Welden hear otherwise, caught at his arm and motioned him to lower his head.

When he had she shrieked in his ear: "I want you to do me a great favour, a very great favour, will you?"

"Will I what?"

He had heard but half of what she said, not because of the roar but because of his thoughts which she, with her questions, entangled.

Now, however, again she was shrieking: "I want you to kill him."

But though she shrieked, she smiled and, in spite of the tossing gale, in spite too of her

ballooning dress, she looked sweet and simple.

Welden nodded. For the first time since they had known each other, what she wanted he wanted also.

Sally nodded too. Clutching at her dress she shouted: "Don't let anyone know why; promise that you will not."

They had reached the gate of a little park in which the Cawtree villa stood. In the shelter of the wall there was a respite from the gale. The sea too sounded less thunderous.

"Promise you won't," she repeated more normally.

Welden cried at her: "That reminds me, will you do something for me?"

"Anything," Sally cried back. "I will do anything in the world for you."

The fervour of the protestation Welden let pass unnoticed.

"Is Prince Saraguine in there?"

"He is leading the cotillon."

Welden got at his card case and from it took a cheque already made out.

"Give him this with my thanks." He turned. "Good night," he added.

"Good night," she replied and, as he moved into the gale, she made a trumpet of her hands and screamed through them: "Good luck."

Welden, holding his hat to his head, passed on to the village. The wind that blew through his flannels, bent the trees, swept the narrow streets, dispersed their germs, refreshing whatever it touched, leaving the quivering air pure and delicious.

The hall of the Roches Grises, saturated with tobacco and electricity, full of people, of hurrying waiters, of parties returning from the Casino at Trouville and of tourists eyeing one another hostilely or with indifference, resounded with calls of the telephone, with slamming doors and the

noise of lifts that ceaselessly rose and descended.

At the bureau, Welden secured a room, sent a chasseur for his things to the villa and, these recovered, at last was alone.

The room, though quiet, was as peopled as the hall. There were visions in it, very many, that gradually, without effort, fused into a picture of a girl's pillowed head.

The girl herself was a stranger. It was not she he had loved, it was another, totally different, one whom his imagination had created, a girl who had never lived and who now was dead. The past alone was real. It surged phantasmagorically, like a great deceit, a lie enormous and cruel, inexplicable from sheer monstrosity. The crime he had witnessed permeated that past, smearing it with the odiousness of a coarse vulgarity.

In the chair in which he sat, he moved.

From the wall at which he stared, he turned. Wherever he looked the picture appeared. To escape it he hid his face in his hands. He saw it there the clearer. At that, an agony made of a thousand wounds, each distinct, each more lancinant than the other, caught and enveloped him. The torture of it thrust into being memories long ablated. Fragments of recollections multiplied in his mind. There came to him the day he had first seen her, the hour he had first loved her, the moment he had first thought she might care for him, and, traversing these memories were tempests of others; shaded interiors, chairs under the trees, the ball-rooms of Newport, Long Island lawns; sudden tableaux of wherever a new delight had been experienced, of wherever a fresh sensation had been born, of wherever she had exhaled her invincible charm.

Within him the sea of these things mounted, adding their bitterness to the sear

of his wounds. There was no myrrh for them. There is none for a death rattle, and as the obsessing vision returned, it brought with it a lassitude so large, so empty and desolate, that it resembled extinction itself.

VII

THE DOOR

On the morrow the gale had gone, flown afar, to die perhaps on some shore of the Mediterranean. In Welden too a tempest had subsided. In the eager sunshine that filled the room he stood, contemplating a note, a hurried scrawl from Sally informing him she had learned from Perkins that Malakoff was leaving for Paris.

The letter fell from him. A telegram different from the one he had meditated must, he saw, be sent, and he wrote one asking Le Hillel to meet him at the Escrime. But there were other things to be done and done quickly. He gave orders; tubbed, dressed, drank some coffee, for even in the great crises of life one must do these things, and in the same spirit perhaps that, at the rev-

eille for battle, men shave and see to it that their gloves are spotless, Welden adjusted his neckcloth and considered the sheen of his shoes.

But Malakoff's move perplexed. He could not understand why the man should be leaving. Toward the man himself he was now indifferent. It was not the man he hated, it was the male. The man had outraged every canon of decency. He had broken hospitality's first and highest law. Yet, he could have done none of these things if Maud had not consented and, the consent granted, any other male would have done the same. Toward the consenter he felt no hatred either, a distaste merely, very immedicable, one that poisoned her and him and life.

A rap had come. It was time to be going and shortly, the bill paid, the service fee'd, he was off to the station.

There, already, an employee was calling

loudly for the voyageurs, and Welden, after purchasing his fare and getting his luggage ticketed, went from the bare white room to the platform and mounted into the grey upholstery of an empty compartment of the train.

He was but seated when he saw Malakoff swinging in. Rising abruptly, brusquely he forced himself by and out.

Malakoff turned angrily.

"Monsieur," he called, "you have a manner of disregarding the bagatelles of the door which I do not applaud. If you care to apologise—"

"I never apologise," Welden threw at him.

Malakoff, pulling a glove from one hand, raised it with the other.

Instantly that hand was pinioned. In another instant it was flung aside and Welden, whose jaw had become ominously square, confronted him.

"That is sufficient. Where can my friends find yours?"

"At my house if it suits them."

"En voiture, messieurs, en voiture!" a guard yelped, for now there were more laggards; Aquaviva, Saraguine and a man whom Welden did not know.

These, ignorant as yet of the little scene, had just issued from the station.

"Monsieur Welden," said the Russian, "my thanks for the envoi of last night."

"Monsieur Welden," said the Italian, "do not forget Chantilly to-morrow."

To an accompaniment of the employees' yelps both were speaking at once.

"You go with us, do you not?" asked the prince, climbing as he spoke into the section into which already Malakoff had mounted and where Aquaviva followed.

"This way, this way," a guard barked.

Welden had but time to clamber into an adjoining compartment. At once the bolt

was shot, a whistle tooted, the train was off.

In a corner sat a woman, very well dressed, tall, fair, presumably English, who looked invitingly at him. Except to remove his hat, Welden ignored her completely.

The clarity of the morning sky, the poplars that bowed and fainted, the lovely Norman land, these things he ignored as well. Over the white leagues his thoughts had run on ahead. He was standing somewhere, in tennis shoes, his neck bare, his sleeves rolled up, a yard of steel in his hand, and Malakoff was before him. Mechanically his wrist moved. The point of the steel advanced and retreated in a line absolutely straight, effecting in the parries only the minimum circle. There were men that stood about and watched and suddenly they saw Malakoff fall, spitted, that yard of steel gone through him.

What was the fair English woman, the

clarity of the sky, the bowing poplars, the lovely Norman land beside these pleasantly murderous sensations? They entertained him fully until the rush of the train decreased into a soapy slide and the porters of Saint-Lazare were calling at him.

Leaving his things in the rue de la Paix, Welden drove on to the Escrime, the fencers' club of which he was a member.

There, in the main hall, on a black divan, a cigar between his teeth, Le Hillel was seated.

Adjacently other members were seated and two men, their hands behind their backs, paced slowly up and down. From a lateral entrance, a colossal lackey in the club livery, with knee breeches and silk stockings, called loudly the sempiternal announcement of French clubs, the amount of money in the baccarat bank.

Le Hillel, withdrawing his cigar, waved it.

"I got your wire. Nothing serious, eh?"

"Do you know Malakoff?" Welden asked, seating himself on the divan.

"Enough to say Good-day. Anything wrong between you?"

Welden nodded. "We had some words this morning."

Le Hillel stretched himself luxuriously. "About a woman?"

"No. On the contrary."

Le Hillel assumed an attitude of still greater luxuriousness. "You mean that the lady is not to be mentioned. That's of course. Whom have you got?"

"You for one, I suppose?"

"My dear fellow, with the greatest pleasure."

"And I will ask Cantire."

"Cantire, no. He is under-secretary. A little matter of this kind always makes talk and that is displeasing in an embassy. Do you know Louradour?"

Welden shook his head.

Le Hillel stood up, balanced himself on his heels, then, with that tread which athletes share with panthers, he joined the two men who were pacing up and down and spoke to one of them.

With a motion of apology to the other, the former turned with Le Hillel to where Welden was seated.

As they approached, Welden arose.

"Baron Louradour," said Le Hillel, "this is my friend and brother-in-arms M. Welden of New York. M. Welden has had an argument over—By the way," he interrupted himself to ask. "What did you say it was about?"

Welden, raising his hat in response to the baron's salutation, answered. "A door."

"A door!" Le Hillel repeated. "That is a very dangerous topic."

"Monsieur," said the baron, employing as he spoke an inflection which musically rose and fell, "we have here in France an

adage with which doubtless you are familiar. It is that a door should be open or closed. Perhaps this one was neither—”

With that, in a gesture of complete appreciation, the baron extended both hands. Though presumably fifty, he had the pink skin of a child, a smile of infinite indulgence, and a large, loose tie.

“But permit me,” he resumed. “With whom did this argument occur?”

“With Malakoff.”

“And permit me, is he to send his seconds?”

“No, I am to send mine.”

“That is to say,” interrupted Le Hillel, “You and me, Baron, if you will do my friend that honour.”

“But how, then! It is your friend who honours me. Permit me once more. Your adversary has the choice of arms; and you, monsieur, have you any preference?”

"Thanks," Welden answered, "anything but swords."

Louradour smiled, displaying as he did so teeth small, even, white as white paper. It was obvious to him that that door had opened or closed on something extremely definite.

"I see," he replied. "No child's play." Turning to Le Hillel he added: "M. de Malakoff resides I suppose in his avenue? Good. It would be discourteous to keep his friends waiting." Turning back to Welden he continued: "You will remain here? Good. In an hour at the latest. Meanwhile allow me to express all my pleasure at meeting an American who views matters as we do."

Laughing and nodding, the two men passed on.

Presently Welden got the club chasseur and sent him with a five franc piece to buy a little cardboard box which cost two sous.

"Keep the change," he said when the servant reappeared.

Welden was lunching then. The meal concluded, he took out his watch from which hung the sapphire with its old French device: *Aultre n'auray*—None but you.

The moderate irony of it mocked him. He detached it, put it in the box and going to the reading-room, wrapped, sealed and directed it to Miss Barhyte, in the care of her bankers, rue Scribe. Then, again requisitioning the chasseur, he sent him with another white piece to deliver it.

"Finis!" he muttered with set teeth and for a while contemplated the epitaph.

"Pardon. There are gentlemen who demand monsieur."

Welden looked up. He had been far away, on the longest journey that a mortal can take, into the depths of the irreparable. It was the colossal lackey that had addressed him. Rising, he followed the man

into the hall where Le Hillel and Louradour waited.

"To-morrow at eight," the former announced. "Baron Louradour has obligingly arranged to have the meeting take place at the residence of M. de Ponthieu, his father-in-law."

"You are really too good," said Welden.

The baron bowed. "It is nothing, nothing at all. M. de Ponthieu is with my family at the waters. And let us see. Yes. It is foils."

He smiled, patted his tie and added: "You will excuse me, my dear sir, will you not? Till to-morrow."

"Deuced nice of him too," said Le Hillel when he had gone. "We might have had to go to Neuilly. His father-in-law's place is five minutes from your hotel. I will stop by for you in the morning. And now, what is the programme?"

Welden lit a cigarette. "Later, if you

like, I will have a bout with you. Then we might dine somewhere and I will go to bed early."

Approvingly Le Hillel nodded. Welden was a man after his own heart, a man sure of himself, one who had no intention of writing letters, of making a will or even a night of it, a virtuoso who knew that the wrist of a swordsman is as sensitive as that of a violinist.

VIII

THE DUEL

The morning broke darkly. When Wel-den reached the street the sky was heaped with clouds sulphurous and evil. To the thin thunder of metal shutters a lout, across the way, was opening a shop. Beyond, two Percherons, harnessed to a high white cart, snorted their ennui. At the curb, in a motor, was Le Hillel. With him was a little man in a tall hat, who held a bag on his knees.

"Hello!" Le Hillel threw out. "Hop in. Be careful." As he spoke he indicated a long green bundle that lay at his feet. "Avenue Gabriel," he called at the chauffeur.

"Do you remember Sarcey?"—he presently resumed as the motor flew up the street. "On a morning a bit worse than this he had

an affair which he insisted on conducting under an umbrella. 'I may be winged,' the old idiot declared, 'but I refuse to catch cold.' How did you sleep? This is Dr. Meyer."

The machine now had turned into the rue de Rivoli. Scudding on, it crossed the fountained Place and shortly stopped in the briefest and most seigneurial of Parisian avenues.

Before them, a great double doorway opened slowly, with respect. Above it was a stone arch in which a blazon had been cut. On either side was a vast, white wall. Within was a vista of trees, large urns, marble benches. Beyond was a tennis court, farther away a house. In the damp, fresh air, a scent of roses and acacias clung. Over all was a brooding quiet, the splendid disdain of nature for the imbecile activity of man.

Simultaneously with the motor, a crimson touring car flew up. From it descended

Malakoff, Aquaviva, Saraguine and a man also in a high hat, also with a bag who, as the others saluted, exchanged with Dr. Meyer a professional smile.

Without speaking all passed in and slowly, respectfully, the great doors closed. On each side a servant in brown was stationed. A step beyond stood Louradour.

He raised his hat. "Gentlemen, I salute you." As the others raised their hats, he added: "It may rain. If preferred, we can get under cover."

Saraguine, withdrawing a glove, stretched his hand horizontally and looked at the sky.

"A little mist," he announced. "It is nothing."

"Good," Louradour rejoined. "There is then nothing to detain us and no better place than the court over there. You have the foils, Le Hillel?"

For answer the green bundle was displayed.

At once, with the French observance of what is correct or, more exactly, of what is so considered, gravely, dumbly, in two detachments, the eight men proceeded to the tennis court where four of them, gathering together, consulted.

Welden took off his coat and waistcoat and tossed them on a bench. He undid his collar, opened his shirt, rolled up a sleeve and was rolling the other when he paused, arrested by a remark overheard.

"I say, Le Hillel," he called. "What is all that about Aquaviva's holding a stick within reach of our foils? To prevent an accident, is it? Well then, be good enough to say that I will submit to nothing of the kind. I am not here to learn how to fence. It was for a thing of this sort that I did learn."

Welden spoke in English which Aquaviva did not understand and which Saraguine who was talking to Louradour did not hear.

Malakoff heard.

The remark, perfectly audible to him, equally intelligible, carried a significance of its own. He knew that Welden could ride, he took it for granted that he could shoot, that he could handle a sword was, he had thought, within the range of possibilities, but that he could fence had never occurred to him. It was for that reason he had chosen foils. A poke in the ribs and easily, in no time, he had fancied he would be done with him. These ideas aiding and fortified moreover by two good seconds, he had come to this meeting, as he had gone to others, without the shadow of a preoccupation, with the view merely to the transaction of an entirely formal and tiresome affair.

Now, however, at the remark and at the sight of the man bare-necked, bare-armed, supple and vigorous, looking very much alive and equally deadly, the ideas he had had evaporated, his rank fell from him like a cloak, his titles like bits of armour, and in

that nakedness, he shivered. Before him surged the abrupt apparition of death.

For one moment, that apparition, the instruments, bands, compresses, antiseptics—enough for an ambulance—which Dr. Meyer and his colleague were taking from their bags, grotesquely but poignantly maintained.

Then at once, the cultivated sentiment of form came, asserted itself, rescued him. With that air which he could assume, that appearance of being surrounded by lackeys ready, at a gesture, to shut the door in anyone's face, he took off his coat, undid his collar, rolled up his sleeves. That done, he looked again at Welden who was looking at him.

"I will see what he knows," Welden was thinking. "Then, in two minutes, Bonjour!"

Concerning himself he had that entire absence of apprehension which comes to some men from confidence, to others from indif-

ference. Both left him as much at ease as though he were about to play polo.

Aquaviva, meanwhile, who had unwillingly yielded to the objection which Le Hillel transmitted, but who had tossed with him for the choice of arms and place, approached now with the foils which he offered, first to Malakoff, whom he stationed fronting the arch of the entrance, and then to Welden who, in facing Malakoff, faced also the house. Yet, as there was no sun, the advantage to either was negligible.

"Are you ready?" Saraguine asked.

Welden felt the point of his steel. It was sharp as a needle. He advanced toward Malakoff and both fell into position.

"On guard!" the prince called. "Go!"

The foils, united for an instant at the ends by Le Hillel, now were seeking each other, crossing, clashing, functioning with light movements of the wrist.

Welden, taller than Malakoff, perfectly

trained, perfectly tranquil, maintained the athlete's easy poise and, while his wrist moved, looked pitilessly at his adversary. As yet however he attempted nothing decisive. His parries, effected always in the smallest possible circle, were as clean, rapid and precise as though, with a buttoned foil before him, he were on the boards, in an ordinary bout. But in parrying merely, he forced Malakoff to show his hand, to tell what he knew, to expose the varieties of his play.

These were of the school, classic but not brilliant, and Malakoff, at the sight of those circles, at the sight of that steel which, when not describing them, advanced and returned in a line almost geometrically straight, saw that he had to deal not only with a swordsman but with a swordsman of the very first class. On the part of an American he had counted on nothing of the kind. At the evidence of it his sense of nudity increased.

He felt not only wholly naked but horribly insecure. The episode which he had regarded as an entirely formal and tiresome affair had rapidly assumed the proportions of an assassination.

"Halt!" cried Saraguine.

Malakoff was livid. Visibly he perspired, audibly he panted and on his forearm was a thin red line.

"You are touched," the prince added.

The wound was examined. It was but a scratch and so slight that it did not require even to be staunched.

Welden, in an undertone, said with a smile to Le Hillel: "I know him now. In a moment I will pin a carnation in his shirt."

Thoughtlessly while speaking, he had rested the point of the foil on the ground. Dr. Meyer approached and tenderly with a little sponge disinfected it.

"On guard!" Saraguine called and, as

the two men fell into position again, again he called: "Go."

The foils met as before. Malakoff, to hide the nakedness of his debility, masked himself behind the hilt, and parried only until after a counter-disengage from *quatre* to *tierce*, not finding Welden's blade, he lunged. But the foil, manœuvred by another and surer hand than his, deflected. An unawaited riposte touched him on the breast and, as he backed from the prick, a return sudden and violent ran him through the throat.

Before him, the double doors, the blazoned arch, the high white wall, soared in the air. They came to him, fell on him, bore him down. From under him the earth slid gently. The savour of something acrid filled his mouth. Above him were peering faces and fluttering hands. These blankly fainted. In that early morning it was night.

Welden looked at the prostrate form and

nodded at it. From the street beyond there floated a cry, trailing and musical, the call of an itinerant offering to repair broken porcelain. Otherwise in the silence of the fragrant garden there was all of nature's unconcern for the idiot agitations of man.

Save Welden, every one, Dr. Meyer included, had got about Malakoff. Welden, who could see of him now but the veneered sole of a shoe, stuck his foil under his arm and went, buttoning his shirt on the way, to the bench where he had tossed his coat. The tableau behind him differed not at all from one that he had seen on the train. It was an old acquaintance and he nodded once more.

At the bench he put the foil down and, getting a cigarette from his coat, lighted it.

Springingly Le Hillel approached. He had with him the long green bag in which now was the other foil.

"You are wounded!" he exclaimed.

Welden, expelling a puff of smoke into the damp, sweet air, stared at him.

"I never was better in my life."

"But look at yourself."

Welden did look. Beneath his left arm his shirt was red. He laughed.

"That comes from the foil, from my foil. Here, take it and put it with the other one."

In a moment he had his coat on, his collar and neckcloth readjusted.

"Where is my stick?" he asked.

"Your stick? In the motor probably. Shall we go?"

But now Louradour, detaching himself from the others, advanced. He looked at Welden.

"Monsieur, I may compliment you and reassure you also. M. de Mal—"

"Is he alive?" Welden, strangling an oath, threw out.

Louradour, pressing together a thumb and forefinger, exhibited them.

"By that much! The carotid artery just escaped. Allons! So much the better. In no time, in three weeks, he will be on his feet."

Silently Welden cursed. But Louradour's thumb and forefinger had separated, a hand was extended which Welden shook, and then, with Le Hillel, he passed on through the slowly opening doors to the purring car without.

"There's your stick," said Le Hillel as they reached it.

Welden looked at the sky. "It's raining," he announced.

"What do you care?" said Le Hillel as both got into the machine and he called: "Rue de la Paix."

"Personally, not a rap," Welden answered. "But I race to-day at Chantilly. If it keeps on it may interfere with the others."

Le Hillel considered him admiringly.

"Gourmand!" he cried. "This morning you nearly killed a man, this afternoon you will nearly kill a horse. That's fine, very fine."

Welden shrugged his shoulders. To change the subject he asked: "What became of the little chap?"

"Meyer! Good Lord! I forgot the poor devil. After I drop you, I'll go back for him. By the way, his fee is fifty francs. Malakoff's man will come higher. Did you notice that he was decorated? That means a hundred."

"Yes, confound it; and he'll earn it. I thought I had spared him that. If I had known in time I believe I would have finished his client as he lay there."

Le Hillel laughed. "No, you wouldn't, and, anyway, we would not have let you. Besides, why be so bloodthirsty? You fought like a god, now you will ride like a demon. I would give a red pippin to see

you. By George! I would give two of them, only—”

“Only what?”

With a little modest air Le Hillel pulled at his cuff.

“A lady is to lunch with me.”

“Here’s the fifty,” said Welden, who meanwhile had got the money out.

Le Hillel pocketed it. “Shall I see you to-morrow?”

There are morrows that never dawn. What is more notable, there are men who know they will not. But Welden nodded and shortly, when the car stopped again at his hotel, he thanked Le Hillel, who whirled away.

IX

THE RACE

After one blue brief moment, the forenoon died, suffocated with clouds. The agony of the day melted into rain. The drops, thin and hurried, fell in sheets, draping the trees with humid fringes, pouring their melancholy on Chantilly's sandy soil and, as Welden, in breeches and boots, drove up from the station, they added a dreariness of their own to the dreariness that was his.

To greet him came the pungent odour of stables, the clean smell of wet turf. He had too a glimpse of dripping ostlers, the vista of a vacant lawn, of a miniature tribune and of a course, punctuated by fences that circled the grounds. But, in lieu of the careless women, the careful men, the line of drags, carriages and cars that ordinarily

would have been there, there was but gloom. Instead of clattering hoofs, ripples of laughter and mounting cries, there was silence and the falling rain.

At the perron of a gaunt, grey house, ugly and comfortable, the cab stopped. As Welden got out, there flew up a covered motor from which Cantire and another man alighted.

Cantire, like Welden, was in riding dress.

"Hello!" he cried. "Rather rotten, isn't it?" Indicating his companion he added: "You know Lord Ferrers?"

"Met you at Melton," said the latter, advancing toward Welden, his hand outstretched.

He was tall, slim, very fair. He wore a monocle and spoke with a slight stutter.

Welden, recalling some incident, mentioned it and both laughed. Meanwhile the door opened. All three passed into a hall where immediately de Dol appeared.

"But!" the Frenchman, in French, exclaimed. "What good wind brings you! You received my dispatch?" he continued, looking as he spoke from Welden's boots to Cantire's breeches. "The race is postponed. Kara Saraguine and Aquaviva telegraphed yesterday asking me to put it off. Thinking you would agree I wired you both at Deauville."

"To the Villa Portugaise?" said Cantire. "It's closed. The duchess chucked the whole thing. Why, I haven't an idea. Have you?" he asked, turning to Welden.

"Not the faintest."

"Of course not. How should you? I remember now, you went up to Paris the day before. There must have been the deuce of a row. Malakoff took the first train yesterday. Aquaviva and Saraguine went with him, I believe, but the rest of us straggled on at noon."

"You were saying?" intervened de Dol,

whom the conversation, carried on in English, had left in the dark. "But, I pray you, come this way."

Moving aside he motioned them into a room hung with etchings and photographs of sporting scenes and horses. There was a table there, a divan, several straight-backed chairs and the frame of a horse, wooden and articulated.

"You were saying?" he repeated.

Cantire, in French, summarised the matter for him.

De Dol raised his hands. "But! It is unbelievable! There, one would say, was a household veritably united. I did not grasp why these gentlemen wired, yet it could not have been because of what you tell me, nor could they have foreseen the rain. Have you seen them since?"

Cantire shook his head. He had straddled the wooden horse. Lord Ferrers was on the divan, Welden on a chair.

De Dol turned. "Have you, Monsieur Welden?"

Welden nodded.

"And they said nothing about the race?"

"Nothing."

"It is unbelievable!"

"They could not very well," Welden resumed. "I was having a word with Malakoff and they were acting for him."

"The deuce!" cried Cantire, sliding from the horse. "A duel! And you not even pinked!"

He laughed. The idea of it pleased him. His grandfather was a duke, a real one, a stately old man with a head empty but noble. Whether on that account or for other reasons is immaterial, but he had always thought Malakoff a mucker. It was not on his account he had gone to Deauville. It was for Sally.

"But!" exclaimed de Dol, his mouth agape. A little panorama was unfolding

before him—Welden and Sally surprised in amorous conversation by Sally's husband.

"And Malakoff?"

"He will be all right shortly."

As Welden spoke, de Dol bowed slowly to an advancing understanding of it all. Malakoff's seconds, aware of the conversation and foreseeing that for at least one of the principals the duel would be damaging had, for that reason, asked that the race be postponed.

"All the same," he affably rejoined, "It was most amiable of you to come. When it rains one's friends are doubly welcome."

Welden turned to Cantire. "Are you afraid of a wetting?"

"Good Lord, no, why?"

"Our horses are here, if we don't race now we won't race at all. I will back myself against you. I will back myself against Ferrers too, if he will. M. de Dol can give him a mount."

"Done," said Cantire. "Let's make it a fiver."

Lord Ferrers dropped his monocle. "Not for me, thanks, but I'll hold the stakes."

"You were saying?" asked de Dol, who had caught his name but who otherwise was again in the dark and that too despite the fact that a flash of intense vividness lit the room, one which a great crash followed instantly.

"It will be clearing shortly," said Ferrers, rising from the divan and peering through a window. "I say," he called, "I believe it is."

De Dol meanwhile, to whom Welden had translated the gist of it and who thought him and Cantire crazy, was giving the necessary orders.

Welden got from his chair and joined the others at the window. The rain had ceased. In the west was the glow of renaissant day. From a tree near by water was falling in little drops, soft and multiple. Overhead

in the still neutral sky, long ribbons of ravens formed themselves into black wreaths and sombre garlands. Welden, to whom the visible existed, considered the signs which it is perhaps their mysterious duty to convey.

But now a footman appeared with rain-coats and a lad from the stables, touching his forehead, just showed his nose.

"The horses are here," said de Dol. "Will you have a coat, monsieur?" he asked of Ferrers.

The latter displayed an umbrella that was thin as a walking-stick.

"Thanks, no. This will do me."

De Dol however had himself helped into a great-coat, took a fat umbrella besides, swung a field glass about him and, accompanied by the others, went out to the perron before which stablemen swarmed and the hunters stood.

The course began the throw of a stone be-

yond. While Welden and Cantire examined the girths, verified the stirrups, looked to the bits and bridles, Ferrers and de Dol passed on. Before they reached the stand, Cantire and Welden were in the saddle.

"I say, Ferrers," Cantire called. "You give the signal, will you?"

"Very good," the Englishman answered. "Now, then, steady."

He pulled a rope. Before the flag could fall, Welden's horse, over zealously, had bolted.

Welden got him in hand, turned him, brought him back, flattering him with pats on the shoulder.

"Vive l'Angleterre!" shouted de Dol. "Vive l'Amérique!"

"And vive la France!" Welden and Cantire, almost in unison, responded.

De Dol laughed with satisfaction. He still thought them mad and said as much to Ferrers.

The latter inserted his monocle. "The going does not seem so bad and the obstacles are not tremendous."

He spoke in French, very correctly, but with so marked a British accent, that he might as well have replied in English. De Dol thought he was agreeing with him and laughed again.

"Steady!" Ferrers called and for the second time pulled the flag-rope.

This time they were off, taking the sticks as though there were nothing there, clearing them, in spite of the rain, easily, without effort.

De Dol followed them through his glass, Ferrers through his monocle.

Beyond, the country stretched, inert and dolent. In the west the glow had heightened. Overhead, the darker sky was veined with flashes thin and sudden. The ravens, assembled now in screaming flight, shot southward.

Quickly but quietly Ferrers swore. Cantire was down.

"I awaited it!" cried de Dol. But at once he could see that the boy was up and in a moment that he was on and off again.

Welden now was leading. Blazes tore on. The splendid brute, with his impudent eye and shoulders like the top of a haystack, had covered the course; he was nearing the stand when, just as he was about to take the final fence, there came a flash vividder than any, a bolt so neighbourly and dazzling that it looked raspberry, and whether it unnerved the horse or the man or both, in any event Welden bent heavily forward and together, turning a somersault, they tumbled.

For a second, without sense of injury or sensation of pain, Welden lingered. Then his two selves, the conscious and the subconscious, scattered, evaporated, ceased to know. Again on that day it was night.

“God of gods!” cried de Dol. “I said they were mad!”

Ferrers, extracting his monocle, vaulted to the ground, where, as from the ground itself, stablemen came swarming, while, over all, indifferently, from disrupted clouds, the sun looked out.

X

THE DEVIL

A surgeon obtained, it was found that Welden had a fracture of the ankle, a fracture of the collarbone and a fracture of the skull.

The surgeon, Dr. Binet-Valmer, thought the first fracture trite; the second, stupid. Had there been but these he would have abandoned Welden to other hands. But the third fracture had the high merit of interesting this man whose country-seat was near by and who was one of the lights of French science.

"He won't die to-day," he absently announced.

As for the rest, a phrase which, for the benefit of the ignoramuses about him, he employed to designate the cerebral cortex—

that marvellous pulp behind the forehead through which the objective changes of the external world are, by some undiscovered witchery, converted into the subjective changes of consciousness—concerning that magical mystery and the fate of it, he had an opinion which he kept to himself.

The examination concluded, he addressed the Comte de Dol precisely as though the poor man were a lackey. He did not regard him as such, he considered him an insect. The Earl of Ferrers and the Honourable Mull Cantire were to him two insects more. Welden was not an insect or even an entity, he was a Case.

“An ambulance,” he ordered.

But de Dol shook his head. The fractures had occurred on his grounds, to a guest of his bidding, and, with that decent sentiment of what decency is which the Arabs discovered, he had Welden tended in his house.

Through the enigmatic laws of life any kindness is repaid in pain. De Dol never actively regretted the charity, though certainly had he wished he might have, for when the report of it all had gone abroad, a woman, very modishly attired, emerged from a cab at the perron and demanded to be taken instantly to where Welden was.

Obviously the lady appertained to that class which the French describe as the top of the basket. But de Dol's footman knew his business.

"Perfectly, madame," he replied. "Will madame give herself the trouble to pass this way?"

Whereupon he showed her into the room hung with pictures of sporting scenes and horses.

From the threshold he added: "Will madame say whom I am to announce?"

"The Duchess of Malakoff."

The man bowed and vanished. Presently he returned, ushering de Dol.

"But! But!" exclaimed the latter, shuffling in, affecting to seem pleased yet succeeding so meagrely that, to cover his embarrassment, he raised and bent over the gloved hand which Sally put out, wondering all the time what the devil he could do with her.

Sally told him. In her sweetest voice she said: "Take me to him, please."

De Dol, sparring for wind, protested, "Duchess, he is unconscious."

Sally motioned at the door. "I know. I have brought a trained nurse. We will take care of him together."

De Dol, sparring still, again protested. "Duchess, I pray you, consider your position."

Sally lifted her little chin. "He considered that. He fought for me. What I consider is his condition."

But now de Dol had got his wind. For a moment, thoughtfully, with kind, honest eyes he looked in hers. Then he went at her.

“Duchess, believe me, never intentionally have I refused a lady anything. It is regrettable to be obliged to refuse you. But your husband is my friend. He has been gravely injured by this gentleman. If you will not consider your position, I pray you consider mine. Can you not see that it would be intolerable were I to do as you ask?”

Sally, floored but not defeated, leaned from the chair in which she sat, flung her arms on the table beside her, sank her head there, and audibly began to cry.

Men who face death unflinchingly, quail at a woman's tears. What is worse women know it. Sally used hers much as though they constituted a stick and de Dol, bruised and belaboured, cursed himself that he had

not, at the start, invented some ukase of the surgeon to which she must unquestionably bow. Yet, after all, he reflected, the surgeon certainly would pronunciamento, and that edict he could hold in reserve should other tactics which then occurred to him, fail.

Timorously he approached and gingerly, with one finger, touched her.

At the attention, Sally's slight frame shook.

"Duchess, calm yourself. Calm yourself, I pray you. If you will but calm yourself, there is a little idea that has come to me which may result in what you wish. Will you let me tell you? Will you?"

But Sally felt now too securely entrenched to yield to what, perhaps, were mere treacherous cajolements. She continued to weep or appeared to, yet, apparently also in a fashion more broken, leaving invitingly between the sobs increasing inter-

vals during which he could speak and which, if what he said were not agreeable, she, with renewed activity, could curtail.

Warily but boldly he utilised one such pause.

“Duchess, let us see. Be reasonable enough to listen. From the moment when this gentleman was carried from that divan to where he now is, I have not seen him, no one has, save the surgeon, the aids and infirmières, nor, until he is conscious do I believe that the surgeon will permit anyone to see him, no one, not even the man’s own mother were she here. If, therefore, I can not do as you would wish me, it is not merely for your sake and my sake, it is for his. But when he is better, when such danger as there is has been passed, enfin! in a little while, I, I who speak to you, will not be here. Then who comes and who goes, I do not know. I do not inquire. It is my intendant who has charge of such things. Do you appreciate,

Duchess? My intendant has not the honour of your acquaintance; he is not a friend of the duke. Let us suppose then that of a morning a lady arrives and says: 'I have come to sit with this gentleman. I am his sister, his promised, his *chère amie*, his whatever you like.' My intendant says: 'But what then? But certainly! And *patatis, patatas.*' And behold the lady who then creates the rain and the fine weather. Does that say nothing to you, Duchess? Does it not seem well machined? Later, I return. My intendant says: 'The sister, the promised, the *chère amie*, the whatever you like of the sick gentleman has been here.' And I say: 'That does not regard me. I wash my hands.' "

Long since the intervals between the sobs had so elongated that the sobs themselves had ceased. Sally's bowed head was lifted. For a lady who had wept so profusely her eyes were phenomenally bright.

"Yes," de Dol resumed. "That is what I say to him. I say: 'I wash my hands.'"

"You promise I may come?"

"But no, Duchess. But no. I do not promise. It is not for me to promise anything. I have nothing to promise about. I play that I am dead. It is when I am gone for the lady of whom I speak to do as she may wish. Of my departure she can inform herself. It is easy as Good-day."

Sally stood up. She held out her hand and looking at him through her oblique, half-closed and entirely tearless eyes said sweetly: "You're a dear."

De Dol took the hand. Bending over it he sighed, deeply, with relief.

"A cup of tea, Duchess? A glass of wine?"

Sally, shaking her head at the offer, sighed too.

"Forgive me, if I have seemed to insist."

“Duchess, I pray of you, it is for me to ask your pardon.”

Sally moved on. A moment or two later when de Dol after accompanying her to the cab, saw to it that she really got in, really drove off, he sighed afresh and muttered:

“Let the devil catch me again—if he can!”

XI

AT THE SIGN OF THE SWAN

To those about Welden it was as though he were dead, drowned rather, sunk into depths where nothing can follow, into those deepest depths where life is without form, without colour, without sensation of any kind. But presently either because of their efforts, or because of influences not higher but the reverse, because he had not suffered enough, death, loosening its hold, retreated; life beckoned, calling him from where he swooned, and imperceptibly, little by little, after infinite hesitations, relapses, retrievals, drifting upward from those depths, he awoke.

Where he was he did not know. What had happened, he could not tell. He did not

try. He did not care. He had but one wish, to sink back again and sleep. But again life caught and called him, wrapped him, rocked him, accustoming him gradually to its subtleties, reconciling him to it and to himself.

It was at this juncture that Sally declared herself a miserable woman. In the opinion of the world she deserved to be. The opinion of the world is very valuable. The fried mixture of falsities on which it daily breakfasts would induce apoplexy in any entity less robust. In its distinguished opinion Sally's husband had fought because of her with a man who was engaged to one of her intimate friends and whom she had inveigled from her.

Even in the way we live now such behaviour is not regarded as nice. Yet any woman might have done as much, and more and worse, and been smiled at, provided only she and her husband continued, outwardly at least, on good terms. But on the open

scandal of scandalous ruptures the world, which if credulous is also discreet, turns always its ponderous back.

It turned it on Sally. Though young, rich, good-looking and a duchess, the attitude of the world justified her declaration and the knowledge that it did gave Sally's mother an attack of indignation morbus of which the nausea lasted through twelve pages of pen and ink.

For final hiccough there was this: "You have disgraced me. No decent person will ever receive you unless you return to your husband at once."

Mrs. Kandy was then at Aix. The paroxysm dispatched, she felt better. Sally was then at Chantilly. The eructation received, she felt no worse. Lodged at the time at the Sign of the Swan, she had with her Harris and Perkins. She had also her thoughts. These, if not many, were pleasant.

Among them was the fact that Mr. Ridgeway, who had conducted the delicate arrangements of her marriage, was occupied with the still more delicate details of her divorce. Before going to Deauville she had consulted him. On her return she had consulted him again. She had done better. She had retained him. He had assured her that she could be free.

He was as good as his word. Evidence of the conversation that had occurred on the night of July the Fourth sufficed. But with that regard for the honour of families and the repute of women which Anglo-Saxon tribunals lack, during the punctilious and brief debates, the court, in withholding any mention of the co-respondent's name, obscured the lady from the public.

That is but gentlemanly. None the less the obscurity was one in which the world saw many things, the obviousness of the fact, for instance, that Sally had but stolen a march

on Malakoff who, gallantly, had desisted from counter charges.

Sally did not attempt to undeceive the world which would not have believed her had she tried. She did not try, however. It would not have suited her book to do so. She had another and a more agreeable task.

De Dol meanwhile had gone, summer was going and Welden, issuing from the great iced bath of death, remounted to life's surface. Among other lesions, there had been an injury to the occipital cortex which resulted in impairment of vision. For a time he could not distinguish objects. When he succeeded, the first thing he saw was Sally.

He resented her presence. He regarded it as an intrusion. Moreover, the reason of it was beyond him. Then from being a phenomenon objectionable and occult, it became a phase of his condition, one that primarily he accepted from sheer inability to avoid and finally from the familiarising effects of

habit. It is related that men who entered the Bastille as though it were their grave, had to be afterward ejected by force. They had got used to it and what human beings get used to they get to like. That was the case with Welden. In accounting for Sally's visits he forgot her former ambuscades and attributed present attentions to the effort he had made to rid the world of Malakoff. Anyway, what did it matter? Sally made his prison endurable. She was blithe as a humming bird. On the end of her fingers was every kind of pretty gesture. They were alert too, very divinatorial. They knew what he wanted as soon as he did. They omitted to be in the way. They grew discreet. Recognising their usefulness, they ceased to flutter. They took themselves away, and away remained, until their return was solicited.

When that occurred Sally, even to the world, could no longer affect to be a mis-

erable woman. She radiated smiles, she exhaled good humour. Dr. Binet-Valmer, who thoroughly approved of the presence of young gentlewomen in the bedrooms of convalescents, encouraged her visits. He knew she was only an insect but he realised that she was a pretty one. Without any faith in drugs whatever, with hardly any faith in anything, he yet had confidence in the tonic of prettiness, smiles and good humour. The infirmières had too. The intendant had also. To them, to the trainers and stablemen, Sally was the right sort. There was no end to her presents and pourboires.

Such were her occupations. In addition she had another. She, too, was having a run.

The post was a good bit off. Between her and it were wide ditches and tall fences. At any moment a tremendous crumpler might occur. But behind her were other obstacles, bigger and wider still, timber which she thought she could not take and which she

had cleared without effort. Moreover, now she was nearing the home stretch. Provided she kept her seat, kept, too, a hand light, yet steady, luck might land her a winner, and at it she went, full tilt, straight ahead, at a pace so clinking that it accounted perhaps for her smiles and good humour.

It was not because of these radiations, but because of others, because it was his destiny to do so, that Welden no longer resented her presence. He accepted it, but with that curious lassitude which Death, in revenge it may be, puts on those for whom it has come and not got.

Apathetic and indifferent, he rejected the news of the day, ignored the cataclysms in Wall street, refused to see Cantire, Le Hillel, Lord Ferrers and the string of visitors that called. But apart from the apathy, apart, too, from the debility incident to his condition, health had returned. Long since his collar-bone had been mended and his

ankle, treated after the setting to massage instead of plaster, was now but a little stiff.

Presently, Sally prompting, these things he recognised and recognising also that further delay would constitute a breach of hospitality, he wrote de Dol his thanks, asked him as an additional obligation to accept his hunter and, after distributing princely presents to the service, had himself transported to the Sign of the Swan.

"What you need," Sally said to him that evening, "is a good, long sea trip. Dr. Binet-Valmer told me so. Don't you agree with him?"

They were at table in her sitting room at the Hôtel du Cygne where, served by Harris, they had dined. The cloth had not yet been removed but Harris had gone. Sally wore a gown in the corsage of which ochre and lilac were blended. Welden's evening coat fell about him loosely. He was smoking.

"Don't you?" Sally repeated.

"Yes," he answered. "But hardly alone and for the moment I know no one whom I could ask to go with me."

Sally smiled, displaying her teeth, bits of mother of pearl, glistening and pointed.

"You could ask me."

At this prelude to the *Invitation à la valse*, Welden shrugged his shoulders. Men generally thought Sally very fetching. Her mauve eyes, oblique and half-closed, might have tempted saints, demons even, with whom she was perhaps akin. But she failed to represent to Welden that which makes some men constant not necessarily to one particular woman but to one particular feminine type.

"Nonsense," he told her.

"It is not nonsense at all," Sally, shaking her head and cocking an eye at him, retorted.

"Why do you say so?"

Welden considered the prelude closer.

After all there was a certain worldly justice in it. Maud having taken up with Malakoff, it was perhaps nonsense for him to balk at taking up with Malakoff's wife. Jointly and severally they could combine for the payment of old scores. At the same time, between public and private payment, there was a margin.

"Why do you?" Sally repeated.

Welden lighted a fresh cigar. "I should be compromising you irretrievably."

Sally sighed. "You have already," she promptly answered.

From over the cigar Welden looked at her. About her throat was a string of pearls. One hand that lay invitingly on the table was covered with gems. But from it the pretty gestures had gone, from her face the smiles had passed. She looked virginal and sad, a sort of melancholy angel, only much better dressed than angels usually are. Through her half-closed eyes she watched

him. There had been her visits to de Dol's, he was thinking, but that was her affair.

"In what way?" he asked.

"Well, you see, don't you know, everybody says the duel was on my account."

That also Welden considered. It seemed logical enough. On a certain night Sally had abandoned her husband. Within thirty-six hours he and that husband had fought. Their reasons for fighting no one, save themselves, Sally and Maud could possibly know. Clearly it was logical enough and yet insufficient to warrant the full measure of the *Invitation*.

"Mrs. Cawtree wrote to me," Sally resumed, "and Fanny Solférino and my mother. My mother was very violent. My mother said that I had disgraced her. She declared that no decent person would ever receive me, unless—"

Sally paused. Like the lady whom she

was quoting, she sometimes embroidered the truth.

"Unless—" she presently continued, and paused again.

But, as Welden manifested no interest in the proviso, she prodded him.

"I don't like to tell you."

Then, seeing that Welden had no intention of urging her, she took her courage in her jewelled hand.

"Unless you marry me."

Welden had been occupied with the logic of her previous statement, but the unobtrusive modesty of this announcement surprised him from it.

He removed his cigar. "I had an idea that you were married already."

Into the melancholy of Sally's face there crept a smile. "I was," she answered. "I am no longer."

"Ah," said Welden. "Is Malakoff dead?"

But now the smile in Sally's face deep-

ened. It burrowed under the melancholy and tossed it aside. She laughed.

"No, divorced. It was so amusing too. Shall I tell you about it? Shall I? Well, after I put in the petition, the judge had us both see him in private. Ridgeway told me he would. It appears that in divorce cases here the judge takes a sort of fatherly attitude and tries to get the parties to make up and, if you will believe me, he did try. He was so nice about it, too, that you would have thought he was my aunt and Malakoff was so rude you would have thought he was my mother. But the judge was really very nice. And so civil! Dear me, his mouth was just full of *madame la duchesse* and *monsieur de duc*. Later on, in the decree, he fined his *monsieur le duc* a hundred francs. Don't you think it was amusing?"

Welden shrugged his shoulders. After the duel it had been grievous to him that he had not killed the man. Now he did not

care. During the race he had tried to kill himself. There too he had failed. But that also was a matter of indifference. Before either race or duel he had been obsessed by the vision of a pillowed head. It had gone. Though he had failed with Malakoff and failed with himself, he had thoroughly assassinated that.

"Don't you think it was amusing?" Sally repeated.

"You certainly have not been idle," Welden replied. "What were the grounds?"

Sally made a gesture. Though there are things that men do, there are women who do not mention them.

Welden nodded. "Who was the co?"

"Who?" cried Sally. "Have you forgotten already? Don't you remember the night of the Fourth of July?"

Welden nodded again and knocked the ashes from his cigar. "You are no longer, then, *madame la duchesse*."

Smilingly Sally stood up. She moved from the table, dropped him a curtsy and sweetly, yet simply, replied:

"I am Sally Kandy again, and yours if you will have me."

"Thank you," said Welden, quite as though he had been offered another cup of coffee. "Thank you. But did not this Ridgeway tell you about the Court of Cassation? Malakoff has six months in which to appeal. Of course he will do nothing of the kind. None the less, in the interim, any marriage of yours would be bigamous."

At that last word Sally flushed and sat down. It is possible that she had misconstrued its meaning.

"What a dreadful expression," she exclaimed. "I am sure I never should think of anything so horrid. But, in the interim, as you call it, what is there to prevent us from going to South Africa or, better still, to the East?"

At the door came a rap. Harris entered, busying himself with the cloth. Welden got up and limped to the window.

In the park without, leaves were falling, falling from branch to branch; falling slowly, as with regret; falling undecidedly with precaution. In their faint rustle was a sound such as the steps of fate may make when approaching furtively, a-tiptoe.

The hesitancy of it filtered into Welden's thoughts. Usually, he knew what he had to do and did it. But illness plays strange tricks and destiny plays others. After all, he told himself, eventually there would be someone else. Perhaps as well then Sally as another. At least she would serve to show to Maud how indifferent he was to her. Even otherwise, how should it matter? How should anything matter any more?

He turned. Harris had gone. Sally through her half-closed eyes, was watching him.

"Very good," he said. "We will go to the Orient since you wish it."

With a feline twist of the tongue Sally moistened her lips. She had the sensation of being lifted lightly in the air. It was the last fence. She had reached the post a winner.

Alone in his room that night Welden still heard the leaves. They fell slowly, solemnly, burying the past beneath their slender weight, raising between him and it a veil, tenuous and aerial. Higher it rose, higher still, ever higher until, sinking again, it enveloped memory in it.

A fortnight later Welden and Sally, attended by their servants, embarked from Southampton on a voyage that took them first to India, where they loitered, then to Hong Kong, where they were married and finally to White Peacocks.

There the journey ended. There, for one of them, eternity began.

PART III

AFTERWARD

I

PERSPECTIVES

“Well, William, how are you? Is Miss Barhyte at home?”

“Yes, sir, Miss Barhyte has just come in. I hope I see you very well, sir. It’s a long time, sir—”

Taking Welden’s hat and stick, the servant showed him into the library, which apparently, was unaltered. The cushions on the sofa were as colourful as before. Opposite, the piano stood, and from the walls powdered heads looked down. But, from the table, the Sicilians had gone. In place of Greek poetry there was now a book of

French verse. Otherwise the room was quite as it had been the year previous and, apart from a black band on the sleeve of his grey coat, Welden himself was unchanged. There was the same smile in his eyes, the same glint in his hair, the same appearance of suppleness and strength.

He had opened the book and was loitering in its languors when William reappeared.

"I am sorry, sir. I made a mistake. Miss Barhyte is not at home."

The mistake must have been anticipated. Welden manifested no surprise.

"Is the general in?" he asked, his eyes still on the book.

"No, sir. The general is not at home either."

But now Welden put the book aside and nodded.

"Give him my compliments and say that I will wait on him at nine to-night. How is he?"

"Pretty well, sir." The man moved out through the reception room to the marble of the hall, where he handed Welden his hat and stick. "That was a nasty accident he had last summer. He limps a little still. Yes, sir."

Opening the door, he held it open until Welden reached the street.

Welden sauntered on. Five days previous he had left Santa Barbara. It was but an hour or two before that he had reached New York. In his head he could still feel the motion of the cars. That would pass, he told himself, as all things do. It would pass, as would also pass a girl's disinclination to be at home.

He sauntered on, turned into Fifth avenue, and sauntered up. At once, a man whom he knew stopped him, buttonholed, questioned, platitudinised. From passing traps and motors, women bowed, two other men joined him and, at the curb, a withered crea-

ture tossed from a barrel-organ a strain of Italian love.

The men annoyed him. It wearied him to talk about what had happened. It wearied him as much to be told about stocks. Pretexting a pretext he hailed a hansom and sailed away.

Presently, at the Plaza, where he had put up, it was comforting to find that his luggage had arrived. After the philistinism of the West, it was agreeable to be lodged in an artistic inn. After the horrors of a transcontinental trip, it was a pleasure to dress at ease. After the convict fare of the Limited, food properly served was a relief. After a tragedy, a change of air is good for the nerves.

Welden, as he sat at table that evening, his recent mourning indicated in his shirt by two small black studs, considered momentarily these minor gifts of the minor gods. But he had work ahead of him and, at five

minutes to nine, hailing a hansom, he sailed back to Madison avenue.

At a door there, as he rang, a melody of Beethoven's which was being played within, ceased abruptly. The door opened and William, after taking his hat and coat, showed him into the dining-room where, before a wide table, the general sat, looking, as perhaps a general should, very fierce.

"William," he ordered, "close the door behind you."

Then, rising, he turned at Welden.

"Had you left your address this afternoon, I would have warned you not to call here. Your conduct has been dastardly. Dastardly! God bless my soul, there is no other word for it."

He paused, removed his glasses and shook them.

"After an accident which I experienced and Maud had joined me at Frascati's, you picked a quarrel with Malakoff, induced the

duchess to obtain a divorce and married the lady, married her, God bless my soul, when you were engaged to my daughter and to-day, your wife barely cold in her grave, you have the impudence to come here. Damn me, sir, if I had acted as you have I would have come expecting the cowhide."

As the tirade proceeded the general's voice mounted to the diapason of a roar. At its conclusion he stamped a foot.

"Yes, damn me, the cowhide."

Immediately, but without heat, Welden took it up.

"From no other man living would I endure for an instant that expression, nor yet the one which preceded it. But you are right, right, that is, from your point of view. It would be dastardly, and it would be the cowhide I should expect, if I had acted as you say I have, intentionally."

"Intentionally," the general shouted. "Intentionally—"

He would have run on but Welden cut in.

"When your daughter left Deauville I was on my way to Paris. She wrote me of your accident, telling me she was going to you at once, and asking me to join you both at Frascati's—"

"Damn me, sir, this is ancient history."

Welden nodded. "Yes, to you and to your daughter. But not to me. The letter which your daughter wrote at Deauville on the morning of the Fourth of July, I received less than a fortnight since at Santa Barbara."

"Even so what of it? They were not dumb at the Malakoff's, I suppose. They all knew of it. Anyone could have told you."

"General, not only no one told me that your daughter had gone, but I was led to believe that she was still there and did not wish to see me."

"Stuff and nonsense! Do you mean to say

that you are a born fool? How could anyone gammon you with such rubbish?"

There are explanations which explain nothing. Unhesitatingly Welden advanced one.

"For the very reason you have given. Because I was a fool. But however much of a fool I may have been I am not a knave. Your daughter will appreciate that."

General Barhyte reached forward and touched a bell.

"Never," he answered. "I shall not allow you to see her and even if I did, she would refuse to do so."

The servant entered.

"William, the door for this gentleman."

He turned his back, took up an evening paper and sat down. To him Welden had apparently ceased to exist.

But Welden was thoroughly alive. Preceded by William, he passed into the drawing room and on to the hall. There, after

getting his hat and coat, instead of going out, he turned into the reception room and went through it to the library beyond.

At the piano, a sheet of music before her, was a girl who, as he entered, turned slowly and slowly arose.

Welden, his hat in his hand, his coat on his arm, looked at her. Unlike the room, she had altered. The allurements of her face, the caress which she had exhaled, the charm of manner which always she had conveyed, these emanations were absent. In place of allurements was blankness; in lieu of the caress was rigidity; instead of the charm, a chill. In her eyes and about her mouth was an expression of distant inquiry, an air of saying: Who are you and what do you want?

Welden, prepared for the situation, began methodically at its demolition.

"Maud, there has been that between us which I know you will come to believe justi-

fies me in disregarding any instructions you may have given, your father's orders as well. When I returned the sapphire—”

Insecure in her intrenchments the girl let fire. “It was your right to do so. It was a right which I had given you and expressly stipulated that you should use. In returning it you said everything there was to be said. There can be nothing to add to it.”

“When I returned the sapphire,” Welden continued, “it was because I thought you wished it.”

“You may or may not have been mistaken, but you cannot possibly have been as mistaken in me as I have been in you.”

“When I returned the sapphire,” Welden persisted, “it was because I believed I had seen you in Malakoff's arms.”

For a second, with diligent disdain, the girl considered him. Then at once, after the fashion which royalty has devised to signify

that a conversation is at an end, she moved back.

Welden had been prepared for that also.

“Do you recall our last night together?”

At the memory evoked, the girl coloured and the disdain mounting with the flush, increased, accentuated by the wantonness of the question.

“Forgive me for referring to it,” Welden added. “But that night when I entered your room, the disposition of it was such that I saw at first but your head. The next night I saw you as before, with this difference however, Malakoff was with you—with you I say, for it was but recently I learned that that night you were at Frascati’s and that your room was occupied by a Mme. Oppenheim, a person whom I did not know existed.”

On the music stool behind her the girl sank down. The flush had gone from her face but the disdain remained.

"Do you know of her?" Welden asked.

Maud, without unbending, bent a little; "She reached the villa as I was leaving it."

"Then you are aware of the resemblance between you. Her hair is precisely the colour of yours. Now do me this favour; put yourself in my place. Had you seen me as I thought I saw you, would you not have acted as I did?"

The girl straightened herself. "No," she answered shortly.

"Do you mean that it would not have affected your relations with me?"

"I mean nothing of the kind."

"Without indiscretion, may I ask then what you do mean?"

"Because I happened to fancy that you were volage, I myself would not have become so."

"Forgive me, Maud, I do not quite follow you."

"Nor can I allow you, nor do I wish to."

Admitting your delusion, one by the way which must have been almost self-evident, the slightest effort on your part would have corrected it."

"Maud, believe me, I had no opportunity."

"I do believe you, your opportunity lay elsewhere."

"No," Welden protested, "it did not. Moreover, the opportunity to which you refer came months later, and though utilised then, it was only for the wretchedest and therefore the most human of reasons, in order that I might at least be revenged."

"On Malakoff?" the girl tauntingly threw at him.

"Damn me, sir," some one was angrily calling, "when I instructed my servant to show you the door—"

Welden turned. Before him the general stood. Immediately Maud interposed herself between them.

"Father," she said, pushing him as she spoke, toward the adjoining room, "go in there, I must speak to you."

"You told me," the old man remonstrated, trying vainly to resist. "You told me—"

"I have not a doubt of it," Maud, pushing still, replied. "But I told you also never to believe a word a woman said."

The door closed suddenly. Welden could at last put down his hat and coat. He had not, he knew, demolished all the intrenchments, but in view of the girl's defence of him, he felt that he had sapped their base.

He was quite in error. None the less, in a few moments, when Maud issued unaccompanied from the conflict in the outer room, her parliamentaries there may have suggested a temporary truce. She stopped at the table, took up the book of verse, looked at it, replaced it and with tolerable irrelevance remarked:

"That was very terrible about Sally.

Have you any suspicion who did it?"

"No," Welden answered. "None whatever."

"I ought, I suppose, to condole with you, but I cannot. Neither of you I think behaved very well. She knew about Mme. Opensheim even if, as you say, you did not. It was because of her that she got the decree. Everybody knew that. It was not in the papers, but it was common talk. Were you deaf at the time?"

"Partially," Welden replied. "At Chantilly I made rather a mess of it."

Of that mess the girl had been informed. At the time and since she had thought it not unmerited. What she did not know and what she never learned was the fact that the mess was intentional. For there are some things that some men do not talk about. Even otherwise, there are times and seasons when any compliment, however unique, falls flat.

"Afterward," Welden resumed, "it was quite a bit before I was about."

"But when you were, did you not hear?"

"When I was, Sally told me that it was you who were the co."

Maud lifted her hands. "She told you that! She told you that I was the co-respondent!"

"In so many words."

"When did you learn that I was not?"

"The other day at Santa Barbara. It came about rather oddly. We were on the lawn, the wind was blowing, it disarranged her hair. Her hair, if you will notice. She wanted a barrette. There was no one within call. She asked me to get it. It was in some case, in some bag. She told me where and where the keys were. She was very explicit about it all. But I misunderstood. I opened the wrong bag or the wrong box. In it I found a letter addressed to me. I know it by heart. 'July the Fourth, Villa Portu-

gaise. Dearest: They have just wired me from Frascati's that my father has been injured. I am going over on the noon boat. Join me there to-morrow. Mille baisers, M.' "

"She had concealed it!"

"Evidently."

"What did you do?"

Welden made a gesture. At the time when he found the letter his mind had shot backward. Facts and incidents trivial in themselves and long since forgotten, mounted from those cellars of memory where whatever we do or say or see is noted, registered, catalogued and preserved. In a sort of retrograde vision the madness of a night returned. He beheld the silent villa and Sally, her hand on his arm, saying: "Don't." He recalled the singularity of her attitude; the avid movement with which, when in the hall below, she had taken and concealed the note; her subsequent eagerness to have him fight;

her stupid insistence that he should tell no one why; her speeches and answers at Chantilly: and suddenly a curtain rose. He saw, if not the truth, at least the lie.

"What did you do?" Maud repeated.

"I went to her and asked whom Malakoff had been entertaining that evening. It was a little before I could get her to admit that it was not you. Finally she acknowledged that it was Mme. Oppenheim."

Again Maud lifted her hands. "It is incredible!"

"Yes, particularly as from the start she quite played on my mistake, at first, I suppose, in order to have me kill Malakoff and later on, perhaps, because she felt compromised by the duel."

Maud considered these premises and then supplied the deduction.

"That is why she asked you to marry her."

"I did not say that."

"No, men never do say such things but

sometimes women infer them. How long afterward did she die?"

"The same night, or rather the next morning."

Maud considered that also, but more longly.

"Don't you see," she said at last, "were these things known, you would be suspected, arrested perhaps?"

"Naturally. If ever a man had a motive I had one. On the night when I went to the room which you had occupied and saw what I took to be you, Sally was at my elbow. She had come to surprise Malakoff, and finding me there and divining my error, took advantage of us both. I am sorry now for Malakoff. I intended to kill him. He knew it, knew the reason, knew that it was all a mistake. But, bounder that he is, he could not like an ordinary cad come to me with an explanation."

"No," said Maud. "Men never explain

and women always do. None the less—”

“None the less,” Welden ran on, “though I can be sorry for him, I cannot be for Sally. What happened to her was the judgment of God.”

That verdict Maud examined and at once indorsed.

“Yes, for with a word she could have set you straight.”

Welden nodded. “It has been a tragedy of errors. Yet, of course, if the police at Santa Barbara had so much as an inkling of it, I would be in jail there now. They suspect me as it is, I think.”

“But I read that you offered a reward.”

“Yes, and it was then I felt that I was suspected.”

Maud looked that over also, but without seeming to get the point of it.

“Surely they could not fancy that you would offer a reward for your own conviction?”

"No, but they could readily fancy that I offered it to divert suspicion, for that is precisely what a bungler would have done."

Welden paused. Presently he added:

"I did not realise that until afterward."

At this, Maud, who had remained at the table, crossed the room and seated herself on the sofa. Welden took a seat beside her.

"What do you propose to do now?" She asked.

"Beg you to marry me."

The girl shook her head. "You need not. I have no intention of it."

"For the same reason as before?"

"Partly. But for others also."

It was now Welden's turn to consider things. While he was at it, she helped him.

"It is not that I cannot forgive you," she explained. "But I have so long regarded you as unforgivable that I cannot immediately forget. Besides, that you should have suspected me is one thing, but that you

should have consoled yourself is quite another."

"Consoled!" retorted Welden. "The word does not fit. I had no relations with Sally."

Maud turned and looked at him. She had never known him to lie, but she was not credulous and Sally, whatever her demonism, had been a very pretty woman.

"That's as may be," she answered. "The point is you hurt me and meant to. I think I could not have done that to you."

For a second she hesitated, her hands lying interclasped in her lap. She opened them and slowly added:

"But I am quite sure I could have done a little harm to her."

"The little harm has been done," Welden remarked.

But that Maud could not have found herself quite able to concede.

"By another," she answered, "and incompletely."

In what manner the harm could have been completer she did not say, nor did Welden ask, but he marvelled at the girl, who, in spite of the character of their previous intimacy, now, for the first time, revealed to him her naked soul.

She stood up, went to the piano and with one hand struck the keys into notes violent and discordant.

Then, as she turned, displaying the oval of her perfect face, and stood there, elaborately gowned, her head erect, she might perhaps, to any other, have presented but a genre picture of a society girl, ultra smart. To Welden she was something else, something higher or it may be, lower; a being intensely human, vibrant with elemental passion.

"She was made for me," he told himself, and crossing the room, he looked her in the eyes.

But however vibrant the girl may have

been, however primitive also, she was not in a mood for caresses. Dumbly against him she felt the revolt which women have for the man who comes to them from the arms of another. Those arms were lifeless now and such enfoldings as they had given perhaps were scant, but some at least there had been, and at the thought of them she recoiled instinctively.

"No," she said in answer to that look. "Not now, perhaps never. I cannot tell. Do not try to ask me."

"Good night," she added after a moment, when Welden, who knew better than to urge against her will, had taken up his hat and coat.

II

THE BENEDICTION

The fatigues compressed in a journey across the continent are of a completeness that satiates the sturdiest. On leaving Madison avenue, Welden slept thirteen hours, awoke, tubbed, dressed, drank some coffee, read a telegram, also a newspaper and, other details terminated, drove to the Grand Central where he arranged to repeat the trip.

The telegram, a night message from Santa Barbara, marked Collect and signed Wicks, was as follows:

*Perkins indicted on evidence personally obtained.
Rings recovered, trial to-morrow. I claim rewards.*

"The imbecile," Welden muttered as the message fell from him.

But the purport of it he found repeated in a morning paper, strung out there with

sensational details, stories of full confession, others of priceless jewels—the property of the murdered woman with whom Welden had eloped and then been shot by the outraged husband—the usual farrago of fiction, garnished in this instance with a picture of White Peacocks which resembled the scene of the crime about as closely as it did the Plaza.

Beneath the ribbon of rubbish there was none the less a fact. There was also a possibility. There had been an indictment, conviction might follow.

The rooms which Welden occupied gave on Central Park. For a moment, from a window, he stood looking at the rain of sunshine, the leisurely motors, the gingerly stepping horses, the parade of nurses out with their charges for the midday air. Yet, though he looked, he did not see, or rather it was not the Park that he saw, but Santa Barbara and the obligation to return there.

The prospect was not agreeable. He had, however, contemplated it before. Now, with no thought of shirking, he contemplated it again. Then, the letter written, other details terminated, he went down Madison avenue for a word with Maud.

But the girl was not at home. William assured him of that, assured him that this time there was no mistake, that she was really out, gone but a little before in her brougham.

Welden took from a pocket the letter which he had written.

"Here is a note for Miss Barhyte. Give it to her yourself and say that it is not to be opened until she hears from me. I leave town to-day and I will wire shortly, but the letter is not to be opened until then. Do you understand? You do? You are sure you do? The letter is not to be opened until I wire. Very good. Here is something for you."

"Thank you, Mr. Welden. Thank you."

The man bowed Welden out, after which he put the letter on the hall table where, later that afternoon, Maud letting herself in with a latch-key as was her custom, found and read it.

Welden then was on his way to Chicago. The press there supplied him with fresh news from Santa Barbara, at Omaha there was more. But thereon, over the plains and through the hamlets which in a sort of horrible coquetry vie in hideousness with each other, there was a silence that continued until Ogden was reached.

Ogden too has its coquetries. But the news of the day may be had there. There is also a stop.

The stop is brief, yet it sufficed for Welden. He wired to Maud, got his trunks from the baggage car, his bags from the Pullman and boarded a returning train.

In a Salt Lake sheet he had read that, the

prosecution collapsing, Perkins had been released. It was then that he wired. The wire was a request that his letter should not be opened. Four days later he was in New York.

On the evening of that fourth day, a bit fatigued, the motion of the train actively continuing in his head, but in a white tie, a white waistcoat—between which two small black studs served to indicate his recent mourning—he was again in Madison avenue, this time in the parlour, as the local drawing-room is sometimes called and on this occasion very properly, for a parlour or parloir is a talking place and Welden found himself called upon to say more than he had expected, and on a subject at that concerning which he had not intended to talk at all.

Maud was not present when he entered and he looked at the faded frescoes with a yawn. In a moment however, from the dining-room beyond, the girl appeared.

Her neck and arms were bare. Her gown was white, striated with violet. As she entered she stooped to arrange or to release a fold. The attitude, but momentarily maintained, was so graceful that Welden forgot his fatigue. Then, as she straightened and approached, one hand just upholding a hem, the picture she presented indemnified him for the little horrors of the trip.

The week previous he saw that she had altered. Now he realised that she had changed again. It was as though when bending at the door, her whole manner had unbent.

She took his hand. "Dearest, another would say that what you went from here to do was noble. I do not. It was You."

Passably perplexed, Welden stared. In the stare the perplexity was reflected.

The girl smiled. Her hand still in his, she led him to the S in upholstery, in one of the curves of which she seated herself while

he, guided by her, seated himself in the other.

"Dearest, will you promise me something?"

Welden nodded.

"Will you promise not to be annoyed?"

Welden nodded again.

"I must tell you, then, that I have read your letter."

Vexation lifted Welden visibly like a lash. He dropped the hand he held, sprang from the seat and went to the window. On reaching it he turned. Maud was looking at him.

"Your promise!"

Welden ran his long, thin fingers through his bright thick hair.

"Your promise!"

"But, Maud, I am not annoyed. Annoyance is not the term. If anything, I am alarmed."

At that the girl also left her seat. Ad-

vancing to where he stood she said in his face: "It is the first time then in all your life."

Welden, moving uneasily, turned away.

"Dearest, can you not trust me? Even if I had not read the letter, sooner or later I would have known."

With the goaded action of a bull before the matador, Welden tossed his head.

"No, never, unless—" He stopped, looked at her, weighed her. "Unless matters had gone the other way. It was only in provision of the contingency that I wrote you and when I did, I expressly instructed William that you were not to read the letter until you heard from me again."

"Yes, so he told me—after I had read it. I am not sorry, nor should you be. No earthly thing could have brought us nearer. Dearest, do you not see that between us now it is for always?"

"You mean that?"

"Mean it! If you wish, I will go with you to-night. The world will say that I am your mistress, but I would rather be that than empress to an emperor."

"Doña Sol!" Welden, with assumed lightness, threw out.

"Doña Sol, yes, if you like, and Héloïse also, for both said it. With them, though, it was heroics; with me it is the truth."

Welden took her hands in his. "Supposing I put you to the test?"

"Give me only time to get a cloak, and for William to call a cab."

"I don't mean that. I mean a greater test."

"Is there any?"

Welden nodded. "Will you marry me?"

Maud laughed in his face. "Do you call that a test? Do you?"

Welden, a bit relieved, laughed also.

"Well, you see," he said, "heretofore it has rather seemed one. I give you my word

I had no idea but that you would refuse me."

Maud turned, surveying the room. Then, assured that they were quite alone, she disengaged her hands, put them on his shoulders and raising herself, whispered:

"What girl would refuse a man who loved her enough to kill another woman for her? Dearest, I adore you."

Welden drew her to him. Presently, as he held her in his arms, he said: "I hope you destroyed that agreeable information?"

With a smile the girl freed herself.

"Completely," she answered.

Then taking him again by the hand she led him back to where they had been seated.

There, after a moment, she added: "Dearest, tell me about it. Did Sally know beforehand?"

"Now, Maud," he protested, "don't be morbid."

But naïvely this girl in whom there was so little naïveté persisted.

"Dearest, tell me this; was it because of the letter you killed her?"

"I killed her for what she killed in me, for her assassination of my belief in you. That was more to me than life, and for it I took hers."

Maud thought it over. But still the episode of the letter rankled.

"What did she do when she found you had my note?"

"What did she do?" Welden repeated. "Personally she did nothing. But the most curious of all physical phenomena manifested itself in her. The red phantom of the human conscience appeared in her face. She flushed with a flame that came to her from hell."

Maud contemplated the picture. It seemed to her over coloured. With a question she toned it.

"Don't you suppose that she was merely angry at herself for having kept the note?"

I cannot conceive what folly prompted her to do so."

"A folly that is common enough," Wel-den answered. "Almost all criminals leave or preserve some evidence of their guilt. There is an uncontrollable impulse which compels them."

Maud smiled. "Thank fortune, that impulse did not actuate my criminal. Did it, dearest?"

"Oh, but it did though. You read about the jewels, the famous jewels, the rings that cost ninety thousand and which an imbecile out there discovered, or thought he discovered, in Perkins' possession?"

"Yes, but it appeared that they were imitation and her own. The papers said she had a receipt from a Paris manufacturer, made out to her in her name."

"Precisely. Sally's stones cost more, but nothing like what I represented. I know it was not very nice of me to have exagger-

ated their value as I did, but I had to supply the police with a motive. Ça n'a pas fait un pli. They swallowed it whole."

Maud laughed. "That was very clever of you. Where were they at the time?"

"The rings? In my pocket."

Maud laughed again. "Where are they now?"

"Where I put them, neatly done up, in the coffin."

"You put them there! But why?"

"Partly from that uncontrollable impulse, but chiefly in provision of just such a thing as nearly happened, in order that if another were convicted, I could prove that I was the man."

"And if Perkins had been convicted you would have done so?"

"Naturally. It would have been the merest duty."

"Dearest, do you wonder that I love you?"

No. I was right from the first. There is none but you. Tell me—”

But whatever the girl's question may have been, it was not asked or at least not then. In the door through which she had come, the general stood.

“Father!” she called in her clinging voice. “We are engaged again and we are to be married shortly.”

Furiously the old gentleman turned on her.

“In all my life I have never heard of such indecency. Yes, damn me, indecency. You were engaged to that man before and he threw you over to marry another woman. The day you leave this house for him, you leave it forever. You are of age, you can do as you like, but so can I, and, damn me, I'll disown you.”

Cursing and fuming, the general strode on.

It was their benediction. They knew it,

knew, too, that it was deserved. But the ball was over, the nightmare as well. Life larger, though more lawful, was about to begin. Slowly the girl's arms went about her lover. At their touch, in sudden retrospect, he saw again White Peacocks and the inaugural sky: the massacre on the horizon, the trooping titans, the luminous arc, the flight of the centaurs and the mirage of the archipelagoes of love.

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